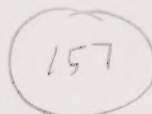


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Wednesday 31 March 2004

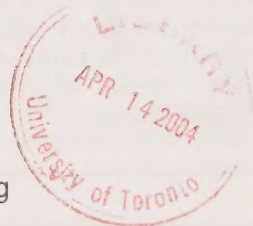
Mercredi 31 mars 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 31 March 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 31 mars 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

OPTOMETRISTS

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I'm pleased to acknowledge Ontario's professional optometrists, who provide critical, front-line primary eye care services. More than three million patients visit an optometrist for primary eye and vision care every year in our province, yet optometric fees have remained unchanged since 1989. In fact, during the NDP's social contract, funding for optometric services were clawed back and reduced a further 15% from 1989 levels. In 1991, the government broadened the profession's scope of practice and gave optometrists the responsibility to diagnose eye disease and disorders, but they failed to provide the funding required for the profession to invest in new testing technologies.

When you take inflation into account, optometric fees in Ontario not just been declining; they are now the lowest in all of Canada. The current fee no longer comes close to covering the cost of services provided. The lack of a fee increase for over 16 years has resulted in a crisis situation for Ontario's optometrists as they struggle to acquire and maintain the equipment necessary to provide quality eye care.

The Ontario Association of Optometrists has asked the government to appoint a mediator to resolve this. The government has flatly refused to respond. It is the responsibility of the Minister of Health to ensure healthier outcomes for our citizens and meet with Ontario's optometrists immediately or face breaking yet another health care promise to Ontarians.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): I rise today on the occasion of Kidney Health Month to congratulate the Kidney Foundation of Canada on celebrating 40 years as the only national health charity dedicated to improving the health and quality of life of people living with kidney disease. As a physician, I have witnessed first-hand the positive impact that the Kidney Foundation has had on Canadian patients.

Each March holds a special significance for those whose lives have been affected by kidney disease. The

Kidney Foundation of Canada and its thousands of dedicated volunteers in Ontario head out door-to-door to raise funds for research, education and patient services. Thanks to the \$67 million in research that the foundation has funded since 1964, people with kidney disease have access to better therapies and expanded treatment options. Yet the numbers continue to grow steadily. An aging population and increasing incidence of diabetes are among the many factors. At the end of the year 2000, 10,000 Ontarians were living with kidney disease or had dialysis. The rate is increasing by approximately 15% annually.

The Kidney Foundation has successfully advocated for the expansion of dialysis services across Ontario. Currently, 1,300 Ontarians are on the waiting list for kidney transplants. On behalf of all the members here, I'd like to salute the important work that the Kidney Foundation of Canada does for Ontario's patients.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I rise today to bring forward an issue in the House that is of great concern to students and administrators at colleges and universities across Ontario. Although this government has moved to freeze tuition, there has been no word about how colleges and universities ought to deal with the shortfall they now face because expected funds are no longer available.

During the election, the promises flew fast and furious and the McGuinty Liberals promised they would "expand our post-secondary capacity by at least 10% over five years," that they would "enhance the quality of our institutions," that they would "recruit new faculty for colleges and universities."

Are these just pipe dreams? Right now, colleges and universities are worse off than they were when you came to power. They now have less money to provide quality education to our students. You're forcing them to make choices that could very well impact the quality of education our students receive. Our colleges outlined their financial plight to your government several months ago and called for additional funding. So far, they have heard nothing.

This is the Premier who styles himself the education Premier. Mr McGuinty, colleges and universities are part of the education system. It is time you made sure that our colleges and universities have the funding they need to continue to provide the excellent education Ontarians deserve.

AROUND THE BAY RACE

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I rise in the House today to celebrate and share with this House and my colleagues another successful Around the Bay Road Race that occurred in the city of Hamilton this past Sunday, March 28.

Did you know that this was the first marathon ever held in North America, and not only that, that it is the longest continuous road race in the history of North American running? It started, actually, in 1894 in Hamilton, and today there are two races: a five-kilometre race and a 30-kilometre race for the more ambitious athletes.

At this year's 110th road race, there were 6,200 runners from all over the country. The annual Around the Bay race is a special event with participants not just from Hamilton but from every possible community around the country. I'd like to take this time to acknowledge and thank the race director, Mr Zajczenko, for his great effort and commitment to another successful race, as well as all the participants in the race—all the runners—all the volunteers, and the support of community members in Hamilton.

What a great race this was, and every year this race continues to grow. I invite you and all the members of this House to join us next year. This is an opportunity to witness Hamilton at its best, to see us for what we are, the strength as a city, and a city that is committed to maintaining tradition and fostering community spirit.

OPTOMETRISTS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Hundreds of optometrists came to Queen's Park today to call on the Liberal government to provide adequate funding for eye care in the upcoming budget.

Three million Ontarians visit optometrists every year to get their eyes examined. With the passage of the Regulated Health Professions Act in 1991, optometrists assumed additional responsibilities to diagnose diseases and disorders of the eye, but increases in funding to reflect these new responsibilities and the increased cost to buy up-to-date technology have not followed suit.

It's been 15 years, since 1989, since optometrists last had an increase in OHIP fees. The current fee schedule doesn't cover the true cost of eye exams in Ontario. This is creating a crisis for optometrists who are trying to buy and maintain specialized equipment. The crisis is reinforced with increased overhead and electricity costs.

Last year, negotiations began between the Ministry of Health and the Ontario Association of Optometrists. The purpose was to develop a new funding agreement for OHIP-insured eye services. Regrettably, these broke down in July 2003. The association has asked the Liberal government to bring in a mediator to help. There has been no response from the government, and negotiations have not resumed.

Ontarians want high-quality eye care. They want to know their optometrists are using the best specialized

equipment for eye exams. They expect their optometrists to be adequately paid for their medical expertise. An increase in funding for eye care is required, and we call on the Liberal government to include this in the budget.

1340

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I rise to reaffirm the importance of promoting energy conservation in our schools. The blackout in the year 2003 was a punctuation mark on how reliant we are on electricity. Our government is committed to building a reliable, sustainable and diverse supply of energy. In doing so, we will also make conservation a cornerstone of our energy future.

A conservation ethic starts by changing behaviours in our workplace, in our homes, in our communities and in our schools. To ensure a lasting effect, however, we must reach our young people.

Today I pay tribute to two initiatives that are making this happen. There is the EarthCARE Canada program, a partnership project with the Ottawa-Carleton and greater Essex district school boards that teaches savings and conservation in schools, but it also gets students to act as ambassadors for increasing community understanding about conservation.

The second initiative is the ecoschools program developed by the Toronto District School Board in co-operation with the Durham, Halton, Waterloo and York school boards. It focuses on offering tools that teachers and students can use to conserve energy in schools. It also chronicles ideas that students can use at home and in the community to reduce energy consumption.

This government believes firmly that creating a conservation culture will be critical if we are to achieve a sustainable energy future and a cleaner environment. But this work in our schools and our youth will make this happen for the future, because they carry home these ideas to their families, friends and parents.

WATER QUALITY

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I arise today to inform the House of a potentially deadly situation at Six Nations in my riding. Last night, Six Nations Chief Roberta Jamieson held a public meeting advising citizens not to drink well water until they are sure it is safe. Random testing of 312 wells found 82% contained coliform bacteria and 27% of those tested had dangerous levels of E coli. This is worrisome. There are nearly 1,400 wells in the community.

We know the Mike Harris and Ernie Eves governments brought in the toughest legislation and regulations to ensure Ontario had the cleanest, safest water in the world.

The current provincial government crows about the steps it has taken to ensure quality drinking water for everyone in Ontario. Just last month the white paper on

watershed-based source protection planning was released. But under this government's watch, the largest native community in Canada has turned up some of the dirtiest well water in Canada.

In a post-Walkerton Ontario, native communities are falling between the cracks. Where is the provincial-federal coordination on drinking water? Are both levels of government talking to each other? Quite honestly, does the left hand know what the right hand is doing? The people at Six Nations feel that neither the provincial nor the federal governments appreciate the urgency of this problem. In fact, much of rural Ontario drinks from wells. The question is: Is their water safe?

GIFT TO UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

Ms Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): It is great pleasure for me to inform the members of the assembly that an announcement of great importance was made this morning at the University of Western Ontario in my riding of London North Centre. Dr Paul Davenport, president of the university, announced a donation of \$26 million from Mr Seymour Schulich to the university's faculty of medicine and dentistry.

Through Mr Schulich's generosity, every year, for generations to come, 60 medical students will receive \$20,000 in support of their tuition and education expenses and 50 graduate students in medical sciences will receive yearly scholarships of \$15,000.

This endowed gift recognizes the tremendous importance of accessible higher education, a view that this government enthusiastically shares. Mr Schulich's donation will also provide enhanced support for two Canada research chairs and create the Tanna Schulich chair in neuroscience and mental health. This gift, when combined with matching funds from the Ontario student opportunity trust fund for undergraduate student awards, the Ontario graduate scholarship program and the federal research chairs program, will bring the total impact of Mr Schulich's donation to \$50 million.

In recognition of Mr Schulich's exceptional gift, the school of medicine will be named in his honour pending university senate approval and will be known as the Schulich School of Medicine.

WILBERT KEON

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): It's a great privilege for me to rise to honour Dr Wilbert Keon, who founded the University of Ottawa Heart Institute 35 years ago and who today marks his last day on the job from which he will retire.

Thirty-five years ago today, Dr Wilbert Keon became known as a doctor, a surgeon, an administrator, a professor, a researcher, a fundraiser and a parliamentarian. Most important, though, around Ottawa and eastern Ontario he's known as a humanitarian. He's made an enormous difference in the lives of so many families, not

just in Ottawa and eastern Ontario but indeed across Canada.

Over the past 35 years, the heart institute has become a world-renowned centre of cardiac excellence, with prevention, surgery, rehabilitation and research. Over Dr Keon's tenure, he has helped raise more than \$50 million for the heart institute from our community. It speaks volumes that Dr Keon has had a phenomenally positive relationship with eight Premiers of Ontario and worked tremendously well with all three political parties in government.

Dr Keon and Dr Don Beanlands, who built the University of Ottawa Heart Institute, could have done that anywhere, could have brought their expertise and perhaps been more well rewarded financially, but they did it here in Ontario.

I see the member for Ottawa Centre and the member for Ottawa-Vanier here. I know all of my colleagues, including Norm Sterling, the member for Lanark-Carleton, our caucus and the entire House want to congratulate Dr Keon for a job well done.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

OPTOMETRY AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES OPTOMÉTRISTES

Mr Kormos moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to amend the Optometry Act, 1991 /
Projet de loi 45, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les optométristes.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This bill amends the Optometry Act of 1991 to allow optometrists to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Wednesday, March 31, 2004, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. It will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1350 to 1355.

The Speaker: Mr Duncan has moved government notice of motion number 19. All those in favour, please rise to be counted.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Eves, Ernie	Peters, Steve
Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Peterson, Tim
Baird, John R.	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Barrett, Toby	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Bartolucci, Rick	Hardeman, Ernie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Racco, Mario G.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hudak, Tim	Ramsay, David
Bountrogianni, Marie	Jackson, Cameron	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Runciman, Robert W.
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kular, Kuldip	Sandals, Liz
Brownell, Jim	Leal, Jeff	Scott, Laurie
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Cansfield, Donna H.	Marsales, Judy	Smitherman, George
Caplan, David	Martiniuk, Gerry	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Van Bommel, Maria
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Watson, Jim
Cordiano, Joseph	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Craiton, Kim	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Delaney, Bob	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wong, Tony C.
Di Cocco, Caroline	O'Toole, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Oraziotti, David	Yakabuski, John
Duguid, Brad	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Zimmer, David
Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie	
Dunlop, Garfield	Patten, Richard	

The Speaker: All those opposed, will you please rise.

Nays

Churley, Marilyn	Marchese, Rosario	Murdoch, Bill
Hampton, Howard	Martel, Shelley	Prue, Michael
Kormos, Peter		

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 73; the nays are 7.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): On a point of order, Speaker: It's appropriate to the motion the House just passed. This evening you, the Premier and the Lieutenant Governor are hosting the Order of Ontario Awards. I was hopeful that perhaps in these circumstances the House leader and Speaker's office would be a little more sensitive to that and maybe have the timing of the House—when I've attended these ceremonies, and I know all members who have honourees here this evening find it most disturbing when the bells are ringing for up to five minutes while we're trying to have the Lieutenant Governor present the Order of Ontario. I just offer it as a suggestion. I would encourage the government House leader and the Speaker's office to consider that in future occasions, if not this evening, out of respect.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Speaker, you'll be aware that up until the Harris-Eves government that was the practice of the House. It is disturbing. I've sat through a number of these ceremonies, and will endeavour to speak with the other House leaders to see if we can avoid bells going off at those times today.

The Speaker: Thank you for raising the point. It is in the standing orders that if we need that, we'd have to

have unanimous consent of the House, because it is a part of the standing orders here.

Having heard no motion to that effect—

Mr Jackson: Mr Speaker, I move that unanimous consent be granted that the House reconvene this evening at 7 o'clock instead of 6:45. I believe the ceremony will be concluded at that time.

The Speaker: I heard a "no."

1400

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HYDRO GENERATION

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources):

I'm very pleased to stand in my place today to make an announcement about Ontario's energy supply. As a society, we have a tremendous dependence upon electricity. The buildings we live and work in depend upon it. The subway, the streetcars, the street lights require it. The computer technology that we use for work and fun won't function without it. In one form or another, it is a key part of our very infrastructure.

With this growing dependence has come recognition of the need to produce power in environmentally safe, clean and responsible fashion. At the same time, last August's blackout brought home to us in a very dramatic way the importance of an adequate supply of reliable power, not to mention that a reliable, sustainable, competitively priced supply of electricity also means a strong and prosperous economy, an enhanced quality of life. It is these conditions that have required us to seek creative and innovative solutions.

In January of this year my colleague Dwight Duncan, the Minister of Energy, announced our intention to seek up to 300 megawatts of new renewable energy capacity as soon as possible. One of the components of meeting that goal is wind power. The wind turbine, for example, at Exhibition Place can produce enough electricity each year to light 250 homes. Since it produces no pollution, it displaces up to 380 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually. This is a proven technology that works, and they will increase our supply of renewable energy.

Another component of meeting our goal is expanding water power. Water power has always been a key part of the electricity mix. Right now, it provides 27% of the province's generating capacity. I'm convinced we can do more in both of these areas.

That is why I am pleased to announce today that our government will be making crown land available for wind and water development, and seeking ways to expand our water power capacity. Today, the Ministry of Natural Resources is posting the decision to open up crown land to wind power development on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry and is inviting interested parties to apply for crown land sites for wind farms. We're also posting a draft water power strategy that

outlines how we'll work with aboriginal communities, businesses and individuals to explore water power opportunities on crown land. By allowing wind farms on crown land and looking at ways to expand water power, we're contributing to a healthier and more prosperous Ontario for all.

Wind power is one of fastest-growing forms of energy in the world. As I've said, it does not produce greenhouse gas or other airborne emissions. It is founded upon a reliable, renewable resource that is abundant in nature and that humanity has harnessed for millennia. It is based on technology that is quite simple and has been around for centuries.

You may be wondering where and how this is going to take place. Commercial wind farms must have a consistent supply of wind in order to be viable. Wind farms will not be viable all over this province. Most crown land is located in areas with few people, such as off-shore or in remote parts of province. Areas with the most potential include the North Shore of Lake Superior and some off-shore areas in the other Great Lakes.

Any proposed turbines will be required to meet location and design criteria that reduce their visual impact and noise. Wind farm proponents will have to follow an environmental screening process to identify potential concerns, including any effects on wildlife and fish. Our intention is to provide successful applicants with a commercial wind energy lease that will be valid for a term of 25 years.

Water power has been harnessed for ages. Much of our current capacity was in place in the 1970s. Again, you may be wondering where and how we'll proceed. We're looking both to redevelop existing sites and to consider the potential of future sites. How about dams and run-of-the-river projects? There is significant potential to redevelop existing sites, potentially as much as 3,000 megawatts. In some cases it will simply involve updating aging technology.

There is still a variety of development opportunities available on crown land, including opportunities that could be developed to supplement or replace diesel generation in Ontario's remote north.

As well, the proposed strategy gives preference to the development of projects that will benefit local aboriginal communities. It encourages local aboriginal participation in new water power development.

Of course, there is also a thorough environmental review process to follow for water power that includes public consultation.

With these important safeguards in place, we are confident that we can encourage the development of renewable energy while ensuring Ontario's natural heritage is protected for future generations. We are doing our part to ensure a healthy and prosperous Ontario with a growing supply of renewable energy.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I am glad to see that the minister has moved forward with this file. I know that the energy community was very concerned that it

was being shut down. I know, for example, that the Sault Ste Marie site has been in process for about four years.

One of the areas that the previous government was able to implement was wind power mapping, and I hope that's completed. Throughout Ontario, the ministry undertook to find out which sites would be best available for the communities out there to produce the energy in certain areas. Of course, though, today's announcement has nothing to do with the fact that tomorrow's price increase in electricity will be reflected within the populace at large.

Some of the other areas of concern would be the fees associated with this. If the correct fees aren't allocated, there will be individuals or companies out there that could potentially tie up sites. I would hope the minister has reviewed this so the fees would encourage those individuals who are serious about coming forward with wind power generation, as opposed to taking on the lease for a 25-year period, leasing it to other individuals and getting a fee back and/or stopping the generation from being developed on certain sites.

I believe the 25-year agreement term was something that the energy community at large was looking for. They wanted to make sure that they have a payback time, and I think that will reflect something they were asking for.

As well, I was glad to see that the off-grid communities are being considered. I know, for example, in Fort Severn, where Hudson Bay, Manitoba and Ontario essentially come together, they have diesel power generation there. They have one ship a year coming in. They are very dependent on ice roads to get their winter supplies of diesel coming up, and if there is a late freeze-up, you can't get the diesel in there. They have major restrictions.

The only concern in the off-grid communities—mostly First Nations, as the minister mentioned—would be the cost for those communities to put wind power generation in them. I would hope they would come forward to help those communities provide wind power generation to supplement the diesel power generation in those communities.

Also, the end user on the grid is a key component to this, because wind power generation can supplement, in a major way, end users. The problem there is that when you're trying to get electricity out to communities at the end of the grid, it's very costly. If they're placed in the right positions, it will be very beneficial not only to that community but to the grid as a whole.

The other area of major concern is the water power generation. I know the previous government had begun negotiations, but my understanding is that the Minister of Energy had shut down the negotiations with the MNR for the utilization of the over 600 dams that are currently in the MNR's control. What was taking place there was that these dams could be used for low-flow generation, which will supply large amounts of electricity to the grid. My understanding is that the negotiations had stopped there, but I hope it's back on line with what we are seeing here.

I know the previous government had put in place a policy that any retrofit upgrades or reconstruction of any

MNR-controlled dams would take low-flow generation into consideration. I hope that's once again on the move.

I'm glad the ministry is moving forward. I think that if they take the time to get it right, all of Ontario will benefit.

I know that my colleague Mr O'Toole has some comments regarding this as well.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Respectfully, I think Minister Ramsay is in fact doing the right thing. In all respect, the best form of flattery is imitation, so I extend my congratulations to the former Minister of Natural Resources, Jerry Ouellette, who led this charge to make crown land an available resource for the production of wind.

For those listening and the viewer, I also commend a copy of the work that was done by an all-party committee of the select committee on alternative fuels. I should name the committee: Jim Bradley, who was on that committee, would know that this is the right move; Steve Gilchrist; Ernie Parsons; Marilyn Churley; Minister Ouellette was also on that committee.

If you want to take a look at this, I think it's an extremely important resource developed by this government as a long-term strategy. I encourage you to look specifically at sections B and B.2 of that report, dealing explicitly with water power and wind power.

1410

I should tell those who are interested in this generation issue that each megawatt of energy generated from wind can create 15 to 19 jobs.

Look at the leadership of other jurisdictions in the world, like Denmark and Germany. There is a long way to go, and Ontario is on the right foot under this government to develop a long-term strategy, not just for energy but for renewable energy.

I commend the minister. You are doing the right thing. You are imitating a policy that many of us have participated in, and I commend the work of the members of this select committee. Minister Bountrogianni was on that committee. Do the right thing and listen to what the opposition has to say.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): On behalf of New Democrats, I look forward to responding to the two or three announcements that are contained in this today.

First, let me deal with the non-announcement. The non-announcement is this: With respect to crown land, the average person knows that you can log it, you can mine it and you can gravel-pit it. So the fact that you can now put up a wind turbine on it—most folks are going to say, "That's a no-brainer," and it is.

The real announcement is this: The Liberal government, whose Premier said during the election campaign that Liberals believed in public power, is now going to implement what the Conservatives were going to do. The Conservatives were going to take the best remaining water power sites and the best wind power sites and turn them over to private, profit-driven corporations. It was not going to be public power; it was going to be more of

the Enron, more of the Brascan. What did the minister say today? The best remaining water power sites are going to be turned over to private, profit-driven companies. The best wind power sites, many of which are on crown land, will be turned over to private, profit-driven companies.

The real impact of this announcement—and I say to the Conservatives once again, you should be happy. They took your energy policy, put a red wrapper on it and now they're trying to say, "This is good and wonderful for the consumers of Ontario."

Let me give one example of how bad this is. The former government sold four hydro sites on the Mississagi River to Brascan for a song. Hydroelectricity produced by falling water is the cheapest way to produce electricity. Those plants on the Mississagi River produce electricity for about half a cent a kilowatt hour. In the private, profit-driven market, Brascan turns around and sells it for six and seven cents a kilowatt hour—10 and 15 times what it costs to produce. And the people of Ontario wonder why their hydro bill is going through the roof.

The interesting thing is that the Liberals complain about what the Conservatives used to do. Not only do you not do anything to change it, but you have adopted it. You're making it your own. Conservative privatization and deregulation have now become Liberal privatization and deregulation.

There are some interesting things in this announcement to make it sound new and different. The minister says, "This will be new and different for aboriginal communities." Minister, I have to tell you, aboriginal communities like Deer Lake and Pic Mobert were developing their water sites in 1990, 1991, 1992. There is nothing new here. You want to pretend that somehow wind power will be new to First Nations. Go to Fort Severn, Big Trout Lake and Kasabonika Lake; the wind turbines are already there. There is nothing new here for First Nations.

What this is about, pure and simple, when you take all of the window dressing and red packaging off it, is that Conservatives were going to sell off the best water power sites in Ontario to their private sector friends, and Liberals are going to do the same. The Conservatives were going to turn over the best wind power potential sites to their private sector friends. Liberals are going to do the same.

The fact that we need green power is a no-brainer. The fact that provinces like Manitoba and Quebec, where they have public, not-for-profit hydro systems, are way ahead of us is evident to everyone. What is interesting is that despite what they said during the election campaign, the Liberals are adopting lock, stock and barrel the Conservative strategy of privatizing our hydro resources.

I just say to people across Ontario, the government's going to now try to tell you that this is good for you, that the hydro bill will continue to go up, that especially low-income Ontarians and modest-income Ontarians will have a hard time paying their hydro bills. The Minister of

Energy will tell you that this is a good thing. He'll even tell small business that this is a good thing. It's not a good thing. These sites should be kept under public control, operated on a not-for-profit basis so they benefit Ontarians, not your private sector friends.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Could I get some order in the House, please. Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition): Mr Speaker, perhaps I could get some guidance. Is the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North the new Minister of Finance? Congratulations, Michael.

I guess I'll have to stick with my original question. To the Premier: Yesterday we touched upon the fact that the Minister of Finance was relieved of his responsibilities under the Ontario Securities Commission on February 26, yet he was not relieved of his responsibilities under the three exchange acts until a week later, on March 4. Could you tell us why that was?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The answer remains the same. Out of an abundance of caution, the ruling that we received from the Integrity Commissioner was that removing the Minister of Finance from his responsibilities for the OSC directly was the appropriate and responsible thing to do, but we thought that we should take an additional step beyond that, although it was not called for, and that's the reason we took that step.

Mr Eves: The Minister of Finance was placed in a position of potential conflict for those seven days with respect to his responsibilities under those three exchange acts. Can you explain to us and to the people of Ontario why you left him in that position of conflict for seven days?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Again, the Integrity Commissioner specifically stated that the Minister of Finance was not in a position of conflict, that he did not contravene the Members' Integrity Act. Again, all I can say, notwithstanding the recurring interest on the part of the leader of the official opposition, is that the Integrity Commissioner has spoken on this matter very, very clearly and said that the Minister of Finance has acted responsibly.

Mr Eves: The Integrity Commissioner said that with respect to the facts supplied to him, in his opinion, up until the date the Minister of Finance actually was relieved of his responsibilities on February 26, he was not technically in a conflict position. Did the Integrity Commissioner or anyone advise you, your staff, the Minister of Finance, his staff, that he in fact was in a conflict position with respect to those three exchange acts and that's why on March 4, an order in council was

passed to relieve him of his responsibility under those three acts?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Again, I say to the leader of the official opposition that we acted out of an abundance of caution. We went beyond the bounds, I would argue, of what was absolutely essential and made sure that the Minister of Finance was removed from any possible appearance of conflict. That's why we did that.

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The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Your stand and your standard of ethics seem to have changed from when you sat on this side of the House into the long walk on that side of the House. You promised open, transparent and, most importantly, accountable government. Yet throughout this entire Sorbara affair, day after day, members of this House, members of the opposition representing the people of the province of Ontario, have come in here to ask you questions and I don't think you've answered one of them a single time. Do you not think you have any responsibility to come into this place and answer our questions?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I am more than pleased to entertain any questions put forward by members of the opposition, but I would think the opposition also has a corresponding responsibility to speak to those issues that weigh heavily on the minds of Ontarians. For example, they might be wondering today, asking why it is that, notwithstanding the fact we have produced information pursuant to the Salary Disclosure Act, OPG and Hydro One employees are not found on that list. They're not on that list because that previous government removed them from that transparency.

Mr Baird: The essence of our entire system is that the people of Ontario can hold the government of the day accountable through their elected representatives, who come here and for an hour a day have the opportunity to hold you accountable. You've said you'll entertain questions, but you're certainly not answering them. Do you not feel you have any responsibility whatsoever to have a corresponding response to a specific question?

The Minister of Finance kept you in the dark for 66 days about his conflict of interest at the OSC. By your answer to my leader, are you saying it only matters if there is a public appearance of a conflict of interest, but if there's a conflict of interest behind closed doors it's somehow OK?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Well, it is a little bit rich getting lectured by members opposite when it comes to openness, accountability and transparency. But I will remind the member opposite: He again makes reference to this notion that the Minister of Finance somehow kept something from me, and the Integrity Commissioner addressed that very specifically. He said, "Put bluntly, it would have been manifestly wrong for you to involve yourself or your ministry in any aspect of the OSC's investigation.... In particular it would have been wrong for you to have taken it upon yourself to disclose, or to cause the disclosure of the OSC/Royal investigation."

Mr Baird: You have appointed a minister for democratic renewal to try to make this place more relevant, but when the most essential point of holding the government accountable is question period and you continuously, day after day, refuse to answer even the most direct question and you change the subject, I frankly wonder why we're even coming here to this place every day.

Hon Mr McGuinty: I didn't detect a question there. At the end of the day, the people of Ontario of course will pass judgment on just how accountable we hold ourselves to them. But I can say to the member opposite and to his colleagues that I will not try to dictate to them when it comes to the questions they put to me. I will do my very best to answer their questions. The answers may not be pleasing to the members opposite, but I will work as hard as I can to ensure they are pleasing to the people of Ontario.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. A couple weeks ago your good friend and soulmate John Manley said that nuclear power is the way to go for Ontario. When I asked you your views, you said that nuclear power had a real future for Ontario. Yet we see today that your friends at Atomic Energy Canada still can't build nuclear reactors on time and on budget. The new reactors that they're trying to build are \$160 million over budget and over four years late. I know what that means for hydro consumers: The bill keeps going up and power is more and more unreliable. When nuclear power still can't operate on budget and on time, why are you trying to sell Ontarians more nuclear power plants?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I know the Minister of Energy is anxious to speak to this.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): There is a range of supply options that Ontario could consider. For instance, our government has decided to phase out coal. We're interested in reducing the SO_x, the NO_x, getting down greenhouse gas emissions. We have talked about natural gas and a range of alternatives. I congratulate my colleague today, because for the first time we're going to have renewable power in Ontario in a meaningful way. In addition to wind, there are other renewable sources. My colleague mentioned water, getting the most we can out of our water system. We are moving forward to ensure that we correct the supply crisis. The member will know what the IMO said today, that we'll have a real problem in 10 years. We can't waste any more time in terms of ensuring that Ontarians have adequate and reliable electricity. Our government is looking at all the possible options to ensure that that supply is adequate and moving forward.

Mr Hampton: I remember when I used to ask these questions of Conservative cabinet ministers and they'd do anything they could to avoid answering the question. Now we have a Liberal minister, and the specific ques-

tion is, how do you justify your endorsement of nuclear power when we know it costs more and it's unreliable? He refuses to answer the question.

John Manley said you should share the risk in the nukes when moving to private development or private involvement. Imagine, Duncan Hawthorne, head of Bruce Power, said, "Well, if we're going to build any more nuclear power plants, we'd want to be very certain that the project risk is not ours." He wants the consumers, the taxpayers of Ontario, to pick up all the risk while he picks up the profit, yet the Premier's good friend and soulmate says that that would be a good deal for Ontario. Imagine, the people pick up all the risk, the company picks up the profit and this Minister of Energy and this Premier think that's a good deal. Can you tell us why, once again, you're adopting the worst elements of the Conservative hydroelectricity strategy?

Hon Mr Duncan: Mr Manley's group provided the government with some advice—advice that we are taking under consideration. One thing we can't do, however, is take under advice anything that member says. This is the member who in January of this year said that coal was bad and last week said that coal should stay. That's what we said. This is the member who campaigned against private school tax credits, and what did he do on one of the first votes in this House? He voted to maintain them.

Today, the member attacked my colleague for moving aggressively on renewables and conservation. I guess we shouldn't be surprised, because in 1992 the party of the member opposite cancelled all conservation initiatives in Ontario. The member opposite has also spoken publicly against private power, but it was his government that introduced private power to Ontario and closed down the public power coming in from Conawapa, a bad decision for—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

1430

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Again to the Premier—I can see the government continues to fiddle while coal burns—before the election you promised to lower auto insurance rates by 20%, but that hasn't happened. In fact, across the province, drivers are receiving renewal notices with double-digit increases. At the same time, the auto insurance corporations, your private auto insurance friends, have declared an incredible \$2.6-billion profit, a 673% increase over the year before. What is your government's answer? Rates still haven't come down 20%. Rates are still going up. Why have you broken your promise to the drivers of Ontario, while the private companies continue to hike their rates?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): It's hard to understand how the leader of the NDP can ask with a straight face a question about keeping a promise when it comes to auto insurance in Ontario. I am proud to say that we moved within, I

think it was 15 minutes of being sworn in as a government to freeze rates in Ontario. I'm very proud of the fact we moved so quickly in that regard.

All auto insurance companies filed new rates in late January. The superintendent of financial services is in the process of approving those rates and drivers will begin to benefit from the new rates, the new lower rates, starting in mid-April.

Mr Hampton: The Premier needs to know that the public spokesperson for the private insurance companies says that after pocketing an extra \$2.6 billion and seeing a profit increase of 673%, he likes your policy but he says to people, "Don't expect any reduction in your rates." You're right: I believe in public, not-for-profit auto insurance because in the province of Manitoba, for example, people haven't seen 50% increases. They haven't seen 20% increases. All they've seen over the last two years is a 7% increase. Rates for most people are about half what they are in Ontario. For many people, they are three and four times less than they are in Ontario.

You said you were going to reduce rates. How do you justify a \$2.6-billion increase in profits and a 673% increase in profits under your watch?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The member opposite is a fervent and consistent champion of government-run auto insurance in every instance, in every circumstance, except when he's in government. They had five long years to bring in government-run auto insurance and they failed to do so. We acted, again, within 15 minutes of being sworn in as a government. We have committed to reducing rates by an average of 10% and we look forward to delivering on that very shortly.

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): My question is for the Premier. As you know, this afternoon the standing committee on general government will be debating the member for Toronto-Danforth's motion that will authorize members of the committee to fully review the Sorbara-Royal Group Technologies affair. In your election platform, you promised the people of Ontario, "Your MPP should be free to represent your views, not just parrot the views of his or her party. We will make sure all non-cabinet MPPs are free to criticize and vote against government legislation."

You also promised to give more independence and power to legislative committees and you promised that MPPs would not be manipulated to do the bidding of the Premier and his un-elected advisers. Will you assure this house that you will not whip the government members of the standing committee to vote against Marilyn Churley's motion?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I am very proud of our caucus. I fully expect that they will, in this circumstance and in other circumstances, vote in keeping with their very best judgment and consideration of the issue.

Mr Wilson: This afternoon is the first real test of your promises concerning democratic renewal. You promised openness and transparency in government. Premier, this could even be a banner day for the Liberal Party. You could actually keep a promise today by not whipping your members, doing the right thing and allowing the committee to get to the bottom of this whole mess. Do you support Marilyn Churley's motion to get to the bottom of this mess?

Mr McGuinty: The member speaks of this being some kind of a test for our party. I would suggest that it's going to be a test as to whether or not the members opposite can breathe any kind of life into this corpse of an issue which has no bearing whatsoever on those kinds of concerns that weigh heavily on the minds of Ontarians.

CAREER COLLEGES

Mr Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. I have been following an issue in the newspapers that I find quite alarming. Reports say there is a case before the Superior Court of Justice regarding alleged OSAP fraud in 1998 and 1999 involving a private career college. The newspapers are calling this case Canada's largest-ever student loan scam. What I find most alarming is the allegation that under the previous Tory government's watch, several million in student loan assistance may have flowed to bogus students enrolled in an alleged illegitimate private career college.

Minister, what is our government doing to ensure that our registered private career colleges are operating as credible institutions?

Hon Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'd like to thank my colleague the member representing Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale for his question. I must tell him, however, that I am unable to comment on any matter that's before the court.

I can say that the private career college sector does provide a very viable and valuable service to students in Ontario. There are some very strong colleges out there that are providing programs in business, technology, health—a variety of areas. I can also tell the member that within a few days after being appointed Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, I directed my ministry to perform detailed reviews—visits to every single one of the colleges. Those visits are almost complete now. My interest is in protecting the students and also in strong colleges.

Mr Kular: I understand that private career colleges are governed by the Private Career Colleges Act. Do we have any plans to review this legislation to ensure that the legislation best serves students attending these institutions?

Hon Mrs Chambers: The Private Career Colleges Act is 30 years old. It's time to revisit it, and I have in fact launched a review of that act. It's a significant

sector. There are almost 500 schools registered. Between 2000 and 2003, some 237 of those schools closed. On an annual basis, between 40 and 50 new schools are registered. I think we need to make sure that the act protects students and protects the good colleges.

1440

PHOTO RADAR

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, your Liberal party in its campaign document, *Growing Strong Communities*, never once promised Ontarians a tax grab in the form of photo radar, if elected. Yet the Premier and the Minister of Transportation seem determined to reintroduce this NDP tax grab to line the provincial coffers. We know that you believe it's a tax grab. On December 17, 1994, you actually said in the *Toronto Sun*, "All it's really done has made the coffers of the treasury swell with amounts of money that are starting to verge on the obscene."

Now your government is considering granting permission to municipalities to use photo radar. Can you stand in the House today in the name of community safety and give municipalities a choice on photo radar, that they can keep the money they collect from fines and, further, only direct it to front-line policing?

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): The member should know that the responsibility for the implementation of photo radar will be that of the Minister of Transportation. I refer to the question to him.

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): We are always interested in any measures that will improve safety on the highways and on the roads. If we ever consider photo radar, it will only be considered for safety reasons on the highways and the roads.

Mr Dunlop: Just for the record, I am disappointed Minister Kwinter wouldn't answer that question, because there is a clear connection between photo radar and community policing. There is no question about that. I think that at the cabinet table you have to make that distinction.

Mr Takhar, if your government foolishly ends up allowing municipalities to implement the photo radar tax grab—and we know it's a tax grab; all you gentlemen over there basically said it in the past. Gerry Phillips, for example, talked about it. Photo radar? "These are just cash machines. They're a gold mine for the province." That's Gerry Phillips on March 2, 1994.

Minister, if you allow the municipalities to implement photo radar, does this mean that this is replacing your promise to put 1,000 new police officers on the streets of our province?

Hon Mr Takhar: As I said earlier, we will only consider photo radar for safety reasons. It will not be considered for a cash grab, but we are always interested in any measure that will improve safety on the highways.

I would like to point out, though, that the member from Leeds-Grenville is also in favour of photo radar.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr David Oraziatti (Sault Ste Marie): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, today you announced that you would be making crown land available for wind power development. In your statement to this House you said that wind power is one of the fastest-growing forms of energy in the world. Aside from the several megawatts that I seem to have next to me here, can you tell me what sense of capacity you think this province has?

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): I'd like to thank the member for Sault Ste Marie for his question, his interest in renewable energy and his astute observations about some of the members in this House. I appreciate that very much.

That's a very good question, because there is a two-pronged approach that we're taking when it comes to assessing what the wind power potential is in Ontario. First of all, we are completing, in the Ministry of Natural Resources, a wind atlas. Basically, that is an inventory of the capacity in the wind strength of this province to generate electricity. We think there is great potential here, especially, as I mentioned in my statement, around the Great Lakes, especially in the part of world where you live and further north, the North of Superior shore—great potential—but also off Lake Erie, both in the seabed of Lake Erie and also off the shore.

Mr Oraziatti: Minister, I am pleased to hear about our province's capacity for energy growth. I would like to address the second part of your statement dealing with the posting of the draft water power strategy. Clearly, the harnessing of water power has the potential of adding new electricity supply for all Ontarians. This could be an excellent opportunity for development in Ontario and especially in northern Ontario. How will the harnessing of hydroelectric of power benefit northern towns, cities and First Nation communities?

Hon Mr Ramsay: As the member knows, the generation of electricity through the power of water was one of the original sources of power for this province at Niagara Falls. Even today, we still depend upon 27% of hydro generation for our hydroelectric needs. We think we still have great potential, and as you rightly say, most of that now is in the north.

I wish we had the topography of Quebec or British Columbia, where we had great water power potential—we don't—of those provinces. The north of this province is relatively flat, but in the James Bay lowlands we have tremendous opportunity of small developments, and this is of particular interest to me because of the involvement of First Nations communities. This will be a great potential for not only replacing some of the diesel-generated power that they have in their communities, but also, working with them, the potential of a revenue stream for those communities to enhance their economic development.

HOME CARE

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is for the Premier. For almost a decade, the community support agencies that improve the lives and health of our seniors in this province have been without adequate funding. Our seniors deserve the kind of support that will allow them to remain in their own homes in dignity and in comfort. In fact, you have said in your election document that you want to provide funding "to strengthen home care so that seniors can stay in their homes as long as possible."

Mr Premier, will you commit right now, right here today to provide these community agencies with the funding that they need in order to keep our seniors healthier, more independent and better able to live in their homes? Will you commit to that, or is this to be yet another broken promise?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I'll refer that to the Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'd say to the honourable member, as you will know, the Minister of Finance will shortly present the budget for the province of Ontario. I will tell the honourable member that that information will be there that will be helpful, but I would also like to report to him that the talk we've had around here as a government is that the transformation we're working on in health care will ask our hospitals to do only what they're best built to do: by making investments in those complementary services at the community level, including home care. So I very much would like to support the premise of the member's question and the language that he used there. We agree that well-functioning home care is essential to good, functioning quality health care in Ontario, and we'll be working on this.

On one other matter: As a result of some support made available to the provinces as a result of the health accord, we do have some additional resources flowing to the province from the federal government that will enable us to make progress on that issue.

Mr Prue: I thank the minister for those kind words, but I'm expecting just a little bit more.

The Premier, on September 17, 2003, in a letter to an umbrella group of community support agencies called VITAL, stated, "Our commitment to home and community care rests on one simple principle—our seniors deserve access to services and supports that will allow them to remain healthy and independent." Then he goes on to say, most importantly, "We agree that a good start would be to use the first budget to resolve the underfunding of these services by increasing the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care portion of the base funding for community support agencies by 25%."

I ask the question again: Will you stick to your written promise and include in your first budget the \$700 million to improve the services seniors depend upon, or will seniors suffer another broken promise?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I'm very pleased to say that the advice and direction there about using our first budget to send our signal about our commitment to home care is exactly the strategy that we're working on. I'm pleased to say that in addition to the comments the member used about home care as a necessity for the independence of our seniors, we also recognize that for our hospitals to function properly, we need to make sure that those post-acute stays at home are properly supported as well, so that people discharged from hospitals have proper care at home to make sure that the service they received in the hospital takes and that they're not re-admitted. I agree with the honourable member that this is an important priority for our province, and we'll demonstrate that.

1450

HYDRO RATES

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Energy. Tonight, at the stroke of midnight, the Liberals will break yet another promise. This time you will threaten the poor and those least able to afford them while you switch on skyrocketing electricity prices.

Minister, you know full well that back in 2002 our government responded to the needs of Ontario by introducing affordable, sustainable prices over a four-year period—a 10-point plan that capped rates at 4.3%. You will also know that it was your government, then in opposition, that unanimously supported that price cap. You say one thing to get elected and do something else once elected. It is shameful.

What are you doing for those people on fixed incomes, those poor, those small business people who are not expecting this price increase? What are you going to do for those least able to pay these unaffordable prices?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): The member is quite right: We introduced Bill 4, which will erase the \$850-million charge to the provincial government that your failed energy policy put on the people of Ontario. My colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs had the rent bank announcement, and my colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services has \$2 million to help those low-income families. We expect that bills for the average consumer will go up by about 4% to 5%.

Finally, we're doing something that that government never considered: conservation. We've built into the new price of electricity the incentive to conserve—something they never did. Our plan will create new supply and will address the \$850-million problem that that government's policy created. Finally, our policy will ensure a reliable supply of electricity going forward into the future.

Mr O'Toole: That's an absolutely shameful answer. I am appalled that you have tried to sham the people of Ontario. In fact, if the truth were known, you know full well that this is only part of an increase in price of between 9% and 27% for those least able to afford it.

I look in detail at your shameful announcement of \$2 million. You know full well that 50,000 people working

in Ontario earn less than \$20,000. Your Minister of Community and Social Services announced 650,000 people on social assistance. If I do the numbers very quickly in the limited time, that works down to less than \$2 per person per year, yet you're passing on, at a very minimum, a \$10-a-month increase. This is a shameful, embarrassing announcement on your part for the very vulnerable in our society in Ontario.

Hon Mr Duncan: That member was a member of a government whose first act was to cut welfare rates by 22%. That member voted on umpteen occasions to freeze the minimum wage in Ontario. That member was part of a government that created no new electricity supply in nine years.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. This is not a shouting period; this is question-and-answer period. I ask the Minister of Energy to complete his answer.

Hon Mr Duncan: That member was part of a government that allowed its backroom boys and girls to bill Ontario Hydro and Ontario Power Generation millions of dollars in untendered contracts, all of which are being paid for by low-income citizens in this province.

TOURISM

Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): Minister Bradley, I'd like to take this time to ask you a few questions regarding tourism in the city of Mississauga. On Friday, March 26, Mississauga released their executive summary on the Mississauga tourism premier ranked destination evaluation, the framework for which I understand was developed by your ministry. Could you please share with all of us here the process that is used to establish the framework in cities such as Mississauga?

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): The member for Mississauga East of course raises a very good question. The premier ranked destination framework is a product developed by my ministry's investment and development office. Members would know that it is a tool to assist regions in identifying the attributes needed for their destinations to be the best that they can be.

The framework is a comprehensive economic planning tool, my colleagues will remember, which assures regions that their municipal resources are being targeted at well-researched, objective and strategic areas identified through the process to enhance their tourism industry.

On top of these tools, my ministry provided funding to the city of Mississauga and its wonderful mayor, Hazel McCallion, in the amount of \$20,000 to assist in the assessment, covering predetermined costs such as production and printing of the final report. I'm pleased the city of Mississauga has completed this report.

Mr Fonseca: I have one further question regarding the premier ranked tourist destination evaluation. From the process, the city of Mississauga has come to a number of recommendations that it believes will help take it to the next step in becoming the premier tourist destination.

Could you please explain to myself and the other members from Mississauga how the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation will help cities such as Mississauga implement those recommendations?

Hon Mr Bradley: First of all, I want to indicate to the member that my ministry has already assisted the city of Mississauga through a \$100,000 tourism recovery grant to encourage businesses to hold their meetings and conventions in Mississauga.

Furthermore, my ministry will assist Mississauga in the implementation of the recommendations arising out of the tourist destination framework by having a ministry tourism consultant sit on the city's standing committee on advisory capacity. My ministry will also provide market readiness training from local tourism stakeholders and assist in promoting investment opportunities in Mississauga.

My parliamentary assistant, Tim Peterson from Mississauga South, and I look forward to working with the city of Mississauga, its fine mayor, Hazel McCallion, and council—indeed all municipalities—in enhancing their attractiveness as tourist destinations.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, your government stated in the throne speech, "Your new government understands it can only hold others to a higher standard if it subjects itself to the same standard." Do you agree?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think that in the days since the election, this government has held itself to a higher standard.

Since the member opposite is unable to ask a real question, I'll use this opportunity to talk. One example would be the way that we're using this legislative chamber and legislative committees to enhance the quality of legislation. In my own responsibilities we've had both Bill 8 and Bill 31 and we've used the legislative process and members from all sides of this House to travel to parts of our province that historically, under that party's government, received no opportunity for input. This is but one apt demonstration of the work that we've already done as a government.

So, yes, obviously we're holding ourselves to a higher standard—a much higher standard, certainly, than that party when they were in government.

Mrs Witmer: We've heard a lot of rhetoric, as we continue to hear from that minister. But the question I would put to the minister is, if you do agree, as you seem to think that you do, I ask you, why will you not amend Bill 8 and subject yourself to the higher standard that you ask of others? Why will you not commit to being accountable to the taxpayers of Ontario for ensuring accessibility to health care services, wait time guarantees and ensuring that the system is adequately funded? Why,

I ask the minister, will you not subject yourself to the same higher standards and mutual accountability?

1500

Hon Mr Smitherman: I'm pleased to take the opportunity to say that of course we will, in two very significant ways. First, with respect to the accountability agreements, an essential part of Bill 8, these are mutually agreed-upon agreements negotiated between both sides and have the effect of saying that in exchange for these precious resources made available by the people of Ontario, we have a set of expectations from our hospitals about what they'll provide.

Second, with respect to the Ontario Health Quality Council, for the first time in our province a government in this House is prepared to provide information to Ontarians across a broad range of indicators about how our health care system is performing, in an easy-to-read format so people can clearly see where we have room to improve and what improvements we have made.

There's one additional important point: Because each and every Ontarian must be involved in the sustainability of the future of medicare, we're going to begin to report to Ontarians on the state of the health of Ontarians, about how we're doing on priorities like stopping people from smoking, activity rates and obesity.

So yes, on the issue of accountability, this government stands there. Roy Romanow said that accountability is the missing principle of the Canada Health Act; we're delivering it.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Minister of Energy. This government has been speaking a lot about the conservation of energy. In this House and in many other places in speeches across the province, you've reiterated our commitment to reach a conservation target of 5% by 2007. Conservation, as we all know, is essential, as it helps curb our need for electricity and reduces, at peak times, the strain on our system, which we seem to need on a regular basis. What has been done by this government to encourage conservation and the demand-side management of our homes and businesses?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Thank you to the member for asking that question. First of all, in Bill 4, we ended the irresponsible price cap of the previous government, which gave no incentive to conservation. Secondly, as part of that bill, we incented local distribution companies with the largest investment in Canadian history in conservation: a quarter of a billion dollars will be flowing next year into conservation.

We're leading by example and will reduce our own electricity consumption in government by 10%. I should say that one of my Tory predecessors was quoted in the *Globe and Mail* as saying this about conservation: "The private sector asked us to get out of large-scale government conservation programs. Those efforts may have made the odd person feel good but they had absolutely no

effect." We think Jim Wilson was very wrong about that, as his whole policy was wrong about electricity. We're going to clean up the mess that gang left for us, starting now.

Mr Levac: Thank you for that answer. I look forward to your aggressive approach to conservation, as we all know it does indeed have an impact on our communities and it will indeed help us with our energy problems.

Minister, you've said repeatedly that the government would be educating the public on how to conserve energy and reduce their bills. What has been done so far and how have we been able to inform the public on this very important initiative?

Hon Mr Duncan: We already have dozens of tips on conservation on the Ministry of Energy's Web site. It's also going to be made available in brochure format.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Duncan: I want to say that the reaction of my predecessor—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The former minister seems to be very excited about this. Could we give the present minister a chance to respond? Thank you.

Hon Mr Duncan: I can understand why he's upset. While he veiled crown corporations like OPG and Hydro One, we lifted the veil of secrecy. While they privatized nuclear inspection services, we brought them back into public hands. While they talked about supply, they delivered none; we are. They cancelled all conservation efforts during their time in office. They talked about green energy and did nothing about it. They threw small consumers on to the volatile spot market; we're developing a plan that'll give them reliable prices going forward. Please, keep asking us questions—

The Speaker: Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I hope this type of demonstration is not encouraging to anybody else. When I ask you to sit, please do.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Premier, you recently promised that your government would "make it easier to access services at all stages of a child's development." The Northeast Mental Health Centre is being forced to cut services to deal with a \$2.3-million deficit, and the first round of cuts includes children. They are: the end of the district day treatment program, which provides mental health services to secondary school students; the end of mental health services for children in CAS foster homes; a reduction in mental health services for children under the age of six living in Sudbury district east, Espanola and on Manitoulin Island; a reduction in services to children who are dually diagnosed with mental illness and developmental disabilities; a reduction in the preschool speech and language service, so the waiting list for service will grow from eight months to one year.

Premier, these cuts are going to have a devastating impact on children in northeastern Ontario. When will you intervene to keep your promise to make it easier for children to access services versus losing them altogether?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): It's for the Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): This is a question that was raised in the House a week or two ago by my colleague, the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. I undertook at that time to begin to work alongside my colleague who's delivering children's services in this province to see what efforts we can undertake to enhance the quality of services provided for mental health across the province of Ontario.

While I'm not in a position today to tell the member what the outcome of those deliberations are, what I am in a position to say is what I said to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin: that we take this issue seriously, recognize the concern associated with it, and we're working on it.

Ms Martel: Minister, if I might, I wrote to you about this issue on February 24. I haven't got a response. The cuts announced were announced last Friday, and they are but the first in a series of cuts. The next round will include adult services and community mental health services.

I remind you that your Premier made a recent promise to ensure that children could get access to services. They are going to lose these services altogether. There will be a dramatic impact on the CAS and its foster care program and a dramatic impact on the school system, because young children will come in with their speech and language skills compromised and older students will drop out because they can't get help with mental illness. You will have emergency departments being affected, because children in rural areas will have nowhere to get service and some of the most vulnerable kids, with mental illness and with developmental disabilities, will have nowhere to go to get service.

The time for discussion is over. You need to give additional funding to the Northeast Mental Health Centre. Will you do that now?

Hon Mr Smitherman: What the member leaves out is that the problems that face our mental health system in this province started on your government's watch. The reality is—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Smitherman: You don't want to hear it?

Interjections.

Hon Mr Smitherman: No, I just—they were yelling.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

Hon Mr Smitherman: The reality, which is well known to all who are providing mental health services across this province, is that community-based mental health services have seen no increase since before Bob Rae's hair turned white. That's 1992. The reality is that our government, as we seek to bring a budget forward

and deliver on our plan for the transformation of health care services, is to enhance the quality of investments at the community level. We're working very hard on this issue.

NURSES

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Nurse shortages are a problem throughout the north, particularly in remote and rural areas. Many communities are deemed underserved, and ensuring that people in these areas have access to nurses is challenge.

The past government introduced a plan in the 2003 budget to provide free tuition for nurses who agreed to work in underserved areas. I'll quote from the Thunder Bay Chronicle: "Kevin Crigger discovered a program last year that would pay his nursing school tuition if he worked in a community that desperately needed nurses. He liked the idea because it meant he'd be able to work at the hospital in his hometown of Dryden."

This free-tuition program has enormous potential to improve the quality of health care and access to health care in the north. Can you tell me, yes or no, are you planning on cutting this important program?

1510

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I refer that to the Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm pleased to tell the member that here's the scenario: Your party, while in government, announced the program, talked about it, put it up on your Web site and never implemented it. No program was ever created that allowed applicants to file.

I spoke with the young man in Dryden who was referenced in the question and I gave him this commitment, which I repeat to the House: Our party as a government believes very strongly in the idea that we have to offer incentives to enhance service in communities, including communities like Dryden as was referenced in the question. We will align that program with a series of other initiatives to ensure that our plans for family health teams, as an example, are implemented across this province so that the people of Dryden will have the benefit not only of one single nurse but of a combination of health care professionals, working together to deliver on the very significant primary health care challenges that are facing many communities across our province.

Mr Miller: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. You should have figured out that you're in government now, so it's your job to implement the programs. That's what you're supposed to be doing. In your election platform you promised to hire 8,000 more new nurses in Ontario. Assuming you're not going to break this promise, how then do you intend to attract these nurses to the areas where they're needed, like the underserved communities in remote and northern Ontario?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I find it passing strange that the man from the party whose Premier said nurses were

like Hula Hoops, that they were as old-fashioned and out of date as Hula Hoops, should now be here talking about them.

On the issue of nurses, we have made extraordinary strides, and 400 or 500 new nurses have already been hired in Ontario toward our commitment to 8,000. Our determination to enhance the quality of nursing, to rebuild the foundation of nursing that was ripped apart by that party while they were in government in Ontario, has already begun. We have begun to do that.

I'm working with the Minister of Labour on health and safety initiatives because too many nurses are experiencing workplace health and safety challenges. I've indicated to the RNAO and the Ontario Nurses' Association that the nursing agenda is a huge priority for us. We've already taken steps, and we will fulfill that commitment because nurses are the heart and soul of health care.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): My question is for the Minister of Labour. I have some serious concerns about the number of workplace fatalities reported last year. In 2003 there were 72 workplace fatalities. In the construction sector alone there were 30 workplace fatalities. I would like to know what your ministry plans to do to try to resolve this problem and make Ontario a healthier and safer place.

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): The member for Scarborough Southwest makes some excellent points. We are determined to make our workplaces healthier and safer than they have ever been before. No person who goes to work should have to worry about what will happen in terms of their safety at the workplace.

What have we been doing? We're already hard at work. In construction, we've had 500 proactive inspections of construction sites in the greater Toronto area since mid-December. That's not all. We've hired 25 new inspectors. They'll be starting work after their training, very soon. But that's not all. A few weeks ago, I launched the Minister's Health and Safety Action Group. We will identify through these groups best practices by business and labour and work together with them to make those practices apply in workplaces throughout the province. Because of the very point my friend made with respect to construction, we will start with the action group in construction and make the workplaces on construction sites in Ontario better and safer than they've ever been before.

Mr Berardinetti: I thank the minister for his response. I also want to ask about health and safety in other sectors. Last year almost 100,000 people suffered injuries severe enough to force them to miss time at work. There were another 185,000 people who were injured but remained on the job. That's equivalent to almost the entire population of London. Minister, I'd like to ask you, what you are going to try to do to reverse those high numbers?

Hon Mr Bentley: Once again, my friend quite graphically places the enormity of the challenge before us. That 300,000 workplace accidents every year is the equivalent of the entire population of my city of London every single year. So with respect to the health and safety action groups, we have launched those. As I've indicated, we've already had the first meeting of the construction group, but there are other sectors. So on Monday last, I had the first meeting of the manufacturing group, bringing experts together from labour and business to share their best practices and make those apply throughout the province of Ontario.

My colleague the Minister of Health mentioned the challenge in health-related sectors. So tomorrow, Thursday, we have the first meeting of the health action group to bring together the people who are working on the front line of health, from the perspective of management, nurses and physicians, to make our health care facilities as safe as they can possibly be.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): My question is to the minister responsible for community safety. The minister will know, because my colleague Ted Arnott provided him with this information just a short time ago, that last week five members of the Barrie Professional Fire Fighters Association received letters encouraging them to no longer volunteer in the nearby township fire department, the Springwater fire department, which is in my riding.

Of course, the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has been doing this for a long time now, discouraging what they call double-hatting: that is, you're a full-time firefighter in one jurisdiction, and in your spare time, in a free society, you volunteer to help out a community that needs your professionalism and your expertise on their fire department.

Minister, I just ask you, since you're aware of this situation, and it's happening across the province—it has been happening a long time—what are you going to do about it?

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I thank the member for the question. Before I give you the response that I've been working on since the day I took on this responsibility, I do not approve of anyone denying their professional experience and not going to a fire. That makes no sense.

Having said that, I have been working with the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, with AMO and with the fire chiefs to make sure that we can come up with a solution that really is fair and equitable. To that event, I have met with the professional firefighters and told them that I would like to have mediation. If we can't do that, then I'm going to bring forward legislation. But the main concern I have is to make sure that the safety of the citizens of Ontario is not put in jeopardy because of some dispute between competing factions.

Mr Wilson: I must say, that was a very good answer—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. That was a nice try. Petitions.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present yet another petition on behalf of seniors from the Black Creek Leisure Homes in Black Creek in the riding of Erie-Lincoln. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas during the election campaign, the Dalton McGuinty Liberals said they would improve the Ontario drug benefit program, but now are considering delisting drugs and imposing higher user fees; and

"Whereas the Liberal government has increased costs to seniors by taking away the seniors' property tax rebate and increased the price of hydro;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should keep their campaign promise to improve the Ontario drug benefit program and abandon their plan to delist drugs or increase seniors' drug fees."

Beneath that of my friends Carol Smith and Ron Bathurst, I affix my signature in support.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition from my constituents in Parry Sound-Muskoka, and it says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the community of Yearley, Ontario, within the electoral district of Parry Sound-Muskoka experiences frequent and prolonged power outages; and

"Whereas the power outages have become a health and safety issue to the residents of the community and the students who visit the outdoor education centre;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Energy instruct Hydro One to conduct an investigation of the distribution and feeder lines that serve Yearley, and take the necessary steps to ensure reliable energy through ongoing forestry maintenance and required line improvements."

I agree with this and I add my signature.

1520

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government was elected after promising in their election platform that they were committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors but are now considering delisting drugs and imposing user fees on seniors; and

"Whereas prescription drugs are not covered under the Canada Health Act unless dispensed in a hospital; and

"Whereas the federal Liberal government refuses to acknowledge this as a necessary health service despite the Romanow report's strong support for a national drug program;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To immediately and unequivocally commit to end plans for the delisting of drugs for coverage under the Ontario drug benefit program;

"To immediately commit to ending plans to implement higher user fees for vulnerable seniors and to improve the Ontario drug benefit plan so they can obtain necessary medications; and

"To instruct Premier Dalton McGuinty to demand more health care funding from Ottawa instead of demanding more funding from seniors."

I have signed this.

OPTOMETRISTS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario will be considering a private member's bill that aims to amend the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases; and

"Whereas optometrists are highly trained and equipped with the knowledge and specialized instrumentation needed to effectively diagnose and treat certain eye problems; and

"Whereas extending the authority to prescribe TPAs to optometrists will help relieve the demands on ophthalmologists and physicians who currently have the exclusive domain for prescribing TPAs to optometry patients; and

"Whereas the bill introduced by New Democrat Peter Kormos (MPP—Niagara Centre) will ensure that patients receive prompt, timely, one-stop care where appropriate;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we support the bill proposing an amendment to the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases and we urge the government of Ontario to ensure speedy passage of the bill."

I agree with the petitioners.

SERVICES TO DEAF-BLIND PERSONS

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): "Whereas the opportunity to communicate is fundamental to the human condition; and

"Whereas deaf-blindness, by its compounding nature, presents extraordinary and compelling human need; and

"Whereas intervention is an essential service which enables deaf-blind people to communicate; and

"Whereas CNIB Deafblind Services delivers intervention services to deaf-blind people in Ontario; and

"Whereas emergency funding by the government of Ontario to CNIB Deafblind Services is due to expire on March 31, 2004;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to:

"(1) Provide emergency funding to CNIB Deafblind Services effective immediately...;

"(2) Provide guaranteed long-term funding to CNIB Deafblind Services to allow for rational planning of services...; and

"(3) Initiate a process with CNIB to: (a) assess the long-term need of deaf-blind people for services; (b) determine an adequate level of services to address those needs; (c) commit adequate long-term funding to address the needs identified; and (d) implement a quality assurance process, with input from deaf-blind consumers, to monitor the delivery of those services."

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to present a petition on behalf of the constituents of Durham riding.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's seniors have worked long and hard to build the outstanding quality of life achieved in our province; and

"Whereas seniors' drug benefits enable older persons to lead healthier lives and avoid more extensive" and expensive "care in hospitals and nursing homes; and

"Whereas, in addition to their taxes, many seniors already contribute toward their prescription drugs through deductibles and dispensing fees; and

"Whereas many seniors on fixed pensions already face higher costs through property taxes and electricity charges;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not eliminate or reduce the provincial drug benefits provided to seniors."

I am pleased to support this on their behalf.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas, as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I'll sign my name to this as well.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals by no means campaigned on raising the rates associated with the Ontario drug benefit program; and

"Whereas the majority of seniors, many of which live on a fixed income, cannot meet the expense of higher costs for essential medication; and

"Whereas seniors in Simcoe-Grey and across Ontario should never have to make the choice between eating and filling a prescription;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To cancel any plans to raise costs for prescription drugs for our seniors and to embark on making vital medication more affordable for Ontarians."

I agree with this petition and put my name on it.

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present a petition with respect to seniors facing higher drug costs. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas during the election campaign the Dalton McGuinty Liberals said they would improve the Ontario drug benefit program but now are considering delisting drugs and imposing higher user fees; and

"Whereas the Liberal government has increased costs to seniors by taking away the seniors' property tax rebate and increased the price of hydro;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should keep their campaign promise to improve the Ontario drug benefit program and abandon their plan to delist drugs or increase seniors' drug fees."

Beneath the signatures of the Wagners, Brent Wigner and Judith Todd, I affix my signature in support.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas, as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I'll sign my name to that.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I rise to present a petition from some constituents and some folks from greater Ottawa. It concludes:

"Therefore we, the undersigned ... demand that the new Liberal government act immediately to:

"(1) meet Ontario's obligations under the affordable housing program agreement;

"(2) create sufficient, truly affordable new social housing that meets the needs of all low- and moderate-income Ontarians."

I'm pleased to give this to Michael.

LCBO OUTLET

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): A petition that calls for a liquor store in Baxter:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the LCBO agency store program is intended to revitalize our small towns and villages and to provide rural consumers with responsible and convenient access to LCBO services;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make available to the village of Baxter an LCBO agency store."

I agree with that petition and have signed it.

1530

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present yet another petition, signed by the Mulle family and Enid Crozier, as a matter of fact. I don't know if that's any relation to our esteemed Deputy Speaker, if he has relatives in Black Creek. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas during the election campaign the Dalton McGuinty Liberals said they would improve the Ontario drug benefit program but now are considering delisting drugs and imposing higher user fees; and

"Whereas the Liberal government has increased costs to seniors by taking away the seniors' property tax rebate and increased the price of hydro;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should keep their campaign promise to improve the Ontario drug benefit program and abandon their plan to delist drugs or increase seniors' drug fees."

In support, I affix my signature as well.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas, as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented by Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I'd like to sign my name to that.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals by no means campaigned on raising the rates associated with the Ontario drug benefit program; and

"Whereas the majority of seniors, many of which live on a fixed income, cannot meet the expense of higher costs for essential medication; and

"Whereas seniors in Simcoe-Grey and across Ontario should never have to make the choice between eating and filling a prescription;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To cancel any plans to raise costs for prescription drugs for our seniors and to embark on making vital medication more affordable for Ontarians."

I agree with this petition and I have signed it.

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I am pleased to read yet another petition from the good folks at Black Creek Leisure Homes in the beautiful Niagara Peninsula. Holly Beers and H.W. McKee lead off this petition, which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas during the election campaign the Dalton McGuinty Liberals said they would improve the Ontario drug benefit program but now are considering delisting drugs and imposing higher user fees; and

"Whereas the Liberal government has increased costs to seniors by taking away the seniors' property tax rebate and increased the price of hydro;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should keep their campaign promise to improve the Ontario drug benefit program and abandon their plan to delist drugs or increase seniors' drug fees."

In support I add my signature.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PUBLIC SECTOR SALARY DISCLOSURE AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA DIVULGATION DES TRAITEMENTS DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

Mr Duncan moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 15, An Act to amend the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996 / Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur la divulgation des traitements dans le secteur public.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I will be sharing my lead time this afternoon with Khalil Ramal, the member for London-Fanshawe; Shafiq Qadri, the member for Etobicoke North; and my parliamentary assistant, Donna Cansfield, who is doing a remarkable job on energy conservation in her capacity as chair of the conservation action group.

This bill is about providing transparency for Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation. The McGuinty government believes transparency and accountability are the best safeguards of our public services. We are making government work better for people by making it more transparent and accountable to the people of Ontario. The passage of this bill would mark another key commitment that our government has delivered to the people of Ontario. We pledged to make OPG and Hydro One subject to freedom of information and privacy as well as salary disclosure laws. Bill 15 is an important step in the delivery of positive change in our energy sector.

We are taking action today to end the secrecy at Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation. The provincial government, as all members know, is the sole shareholder of these successor companies of the old Ontario Hydro. As shareholder, we feel that the operations of these companies should not be hidden from public scrutiny. Transparency and accountability are at the core of our priorities. This bill and our change to freedom of information regulations demonstrate our commitment to these key principles.

The lack of transparency and accountability at OPG and Hydro One under the former government led to a serious waste of public funds. We're cleaning up the mess left by the former government and working hard to

fix what's broken. This is just another example of how we're giving Ontarians the straight goods. We are acting decisively to ensure that Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation will be subject to the same salary disclosure rules as all other public servants—we saw those disclosures earlier today. In addition, we're making these provisions retroactive to 1999, because when we applied freedom of information to Hydro One and OPG, we found a lot of things we never imagined we'd find. Again, accountability and transparency are essential to good governance and will prevent the kind of abuse that happened under the Harris-Eves government at both of these large corporations.

The other reason, and in some ways a more important reason, is that we're committed to improving the value Ontarians get for the money they invest in their public services. We have also ensured that Hydro One and OPG are subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, as I mentioned a moment ago. These actions ensure that the same rules apply to them as to other crown agencies, corporations and publicly funded organizations. We voted in favour of the original legislation some five or six years ago, and this extends it. This lifts the veil of secrecy that was left by the Tory government, and now we understand why it was left. When we saw the disclosures that have come out under freedom of information and privacy, we saw that they created a little fiefdom for their friends and political fixers to make money on untendered contracts without any opportunity for scrutiny by the public.

The McGuinty government will ensure that provincially held assets—and these are assets. This is Niagara Falls; these are our power generation assets across this great province; it's the dams on the Mattagami River; it is the nuclear assets at Bruce, Pickering and Darlington. We will ensure that those assets are managed in the best interests of the public.

We believe the people of this province have the right to access information about the activity of these two very important companies. Initiatives including aggressive conservation, new and greener sources of supply and accountability at our crown corporations will help us meet our objectives of cleaner air, consumer protection and a sustainable supply of electricity for this province moving forward. Public accountability is a key component of that.

Let me address the act in its specifics for a moment. Unlike other provincially owned companies, Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation employees have not been required to disclose salaries under the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act. Again, this action was taken by the Harris-Eves government after its 1998 restructuring of Ontario Hydro. Our plan is to ensure that the same rules apply here as elsewhere. We want to ensure that provincially held electricity assets are managed in the best interests of the public, with transparency and accountability being an important part of that.

1540

As I mentioned a moment ago, we are committed to improving the value Ontarians get for the dollars invested

in public services. In Ontario, many other provincial organizations providing public services have disclosed this kind of salary information since 1996. Municipalities, colleges, universities, hospitals, to name a few, must provide this information. It was only OPG and Hydro One that were cloaked in a veil of secrecy by the previous government. Ontarians need to know what they are paying for, whether it is through taxes or electricity rates. We are ensuring that salary information for OPG and Hydro One is treated in the same manner as other public sector organizations in the province.

The McGuinty government is proposing to retroactively make public the salaries of those who earned more than \$100,000 a year at Hydro One and OPG, going back to 1999, when those corporations came into existence following the wrap-up of the old Ontario Hydro. We are doing this to ensure consistency with other public sector organizations that have disclosed this kind of salary information since 1996. Disclosure for the years 1999 through 2003 will be required within one month of the bill receiving royal assent. I call on my friends in the Conservative Party and the NDP to give this bill speedy passage so the public can have access to this information.

When this bill, the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, came into force in 1996, all other public sector organizations had to provide, by March 31st of each year, the names, salaries and taxable benefits paid to employees who earned \$100,000 or more in the previous calendar year. The bill authorizes employers to disclose the value of taxable benefits as defined by the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency. That's a very important thing. We also need to know what we are spending on benefits.

I was quite astounded when, under freedom of information, we found out that OPG, even though it wasn't making money, had a one-third interest in a lease on a private box at the Air Canada Centre. Who was attending the games? Many of the members of the previous government. They were sipping on fine wines and having oysters, all the while running the company into the ground, all the while not providing for new supply. Do you know what our Premier did when we found out about this? Our Premier ordered that we get out of that lease. We are having some difficulty, but in the interim the Premier ordered me to make sure that those tickets went to kids who otherwise wouldn't get to hockey or basketball games. That is a big difference between the Tory government and the Liberal government. That is why this kind of legislation is so important.

While preaching fiscal restraint—a lot of members here are new, but I am sure they followed in the news the daily diatribes against welfare recipients, cutting welfare benefits 22%, taking away pregnant mothers' nutrition supplements on welfare, scolding public servants and unions for being greedy, and all the while millions of dollars in untendered contracts were going to Tory political hacks, veiled so the public couldn't see it. Premier Dalton McGuinty and his government have lifted the veil. Not only can the people of Ontario see what was

going on, they can smell the stench from a party that had become too comfortable in power. They can sense the hypocrisy of members speaking out about restraint and at the same time secretly availing themselves of benefits that many in the public can only ever dream of. As a result of this very progressive legislation which sheds light on these two corporations, that will never happen again.

You should also note that this act gives individuals the statutory right to request access to records in the custody and control of government institutions. This general right of access is subject to narrow and specific exemptions and exclusions contained in the act. Of course, I am now referring to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. This act protects the privacy of individuals by requiring government to follow specific rules regarding the collection, use and disclosure of personal information.

It was interesting that the previous government, in shielding these two corporations from public accountability, referenced their ability to operate in the marketplace. As I said earlier, we are committed to improving the value Ontarians get for the dollars invested in public services. The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act contains certain exemptions that protect confidential commercial information of corporations if disclosure could cause them harm in the marketplace.

Interestingly, in one of the cases of a former Tory political aide's contract, it had a one-page e-mail. That was the only paper, and there was nothing commercially sensitive; it was just simply giving the government of the day advice on what this or that media member thought of any particular policy. That was clearly an excuse by the previous government to keep that kind of information out of public hands. So we believe we're still protecting the commercial interests and viability of OPG and Hydro One.

I want to speak for a moment about the role of the privacy commissioner here. The Information and Privacy Commissioner has long been an advocate of ensuring transparency and accountability. We will continue to look to the commissioner for comments and suggestions as we work to ensure greater transparency and accountability in the provision of such public goods as electricity.

We also made the freedom of information requests retrospective; that is, we made them apply to years past. Again, that was important. As I indicated earlier, it raised all these issues that have now become well known in the public and have clearly branded the previous Harris-Eves government as hypocritical or certainly being of two minds when it comes to fiscal restraint: on the one hand, publicly preaching restraint; on the other hand, rewarding friends and political cronies with large contracts. As I said earlier, we have to remember that it was the same gang that was giving their friends these untendered contracts that cut social assistance benefits by 22% as one of the first acts of their government.

In conclusion, transparency and accountability are at the core of our priorities. This bill and our change to the

freedom of information regulations demonstrate our commitment to these key principles. Our government is taking action to ensure that the secrecy ends at Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation. The provincial government is the sole shareholder of these successor companies to the old Ontario Hydro. As shareholders and as an elected body, we feel the operations of these companies should not be hidden from public scrutiny.

Keeping the lights on is essential to the success and well-being of our hospitals, schools, businesses and homes. If we address energy policy in a responsible way, our economy will prosper and our families will have a stronger Ontario in which to grow. Our initiatives include aggressive conservation, new supply and accountability at our crown corporations. Bill 15 will help us meet our goals on accountability and transparency.

The passage of this bill would mark another key commitment that our government has delivered to the people of Ontario. We pledged to make all provincially owned power companies subject to freedom of information and salary disclosure laws. Bill 15, this bill, is an important step in the delivery of positive change in our energy sector.

Some of the other initiatives we have looked at are aggressive conservation. My parliamentary assistant, Donna Cansfield, is here today. She is the head of our conservation action group. I want to pay special tribute to her today. The electricity conservation supply task force report called for a champion of conservation, and Donna is that champion. We are lucky in Ontario to have her working on our behalf.

As I said earlier in the House, the NDP government in 1993 cancelled all conservation programs in Ontario. The old Ontario Hydro—Maurice Strong was then the chair. Under that Rae government, they cancelled all conservation initiatives. Had the initiatives that had been put in place been followed through on, we would have saved 5,200 megawatts a year. Let me put that into perspective for you. That would have allowed us to close Nanticoke, the largest and dirtiest of our coal-firing plants, as well as some of the other coal plants—a total generation of about 7,500. That would have got us five-sevenths of the way, had the NDP simply not done such a short-sighted thing.

1550

The previous government, the Harris-Eves government—well, I quoted my predecessor, Mr Wilson, when he was the energy minister, saying in the *Globe and Mail*, "Well, the private sector said they wouldn't work. It might make a few people happy if we did this." But the fact is, conservation does work. It works all over the world. The only place we don't have a great conservation program is in Ontario. Why? Because of the NDP and the Conservatives simply not showing any interest in it. They wanted the old ways, the old practices, where they tried to pretend you could give electricity away or subsidize the price.

I see the leader of the third party, a member of a government that introduced private power into Ontario that's still costing the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp

\$4.5 billion, a member of the third party who in January wanted the coal plants closed and last week wanted them open. In his book, *Public Power*, this member advocates the need for private sector involvement in electricity. He's been all over the board.

He was also part of a government that cancelled a deal with the province of Manitoba that would have provided run-of-the-river hydroelectricity from the Conawapa project on the Upper Churchill River in northern Manitoba, a deal that had been signed, I believe, in 1988. Had they not cancelled that, we would have another 1,250 megawatts of clean, renewable power coming into Ontario that we won't have now. I'm pleased to tell you that I'll be meeting with the energy minister from Manitoba later this week to further discuss if we can get this great project back on.

I hope the third party and the official opposition will allow speedy passage of this legislation so that we can get on to the real problems of undoing what the Conservatives and the NDP before them did, and that is to undermine our economic viability in terms of electricity. We're committed to doing the responsible thing, to bringing on new, reliable supply that will ensure we won't see the same—we had a 40% increase in the price of electricity when Mr Hampton was a member of government. Before they froze the price, it had gone up 40%.

I think that was almost as bad as the increase under the Tory government when they put small consumers on the spot market. The spot market that the Tories created hasn't worked. None of their goals have been achieved. Later this month, we'll be outlining a responsible policy in electricity that will deal with the mess created by the Tories and the NDP in hydro.

I'm proud to be part of a government that's bringing about real change. Here today, we have the opportunity to pass a bill that will allow us to keep yet another promise we made to the people of this province. I urge the Conservatives and the New Democrats to give speedy passage to Bill 15 so that we can shine the light on OPG and Ontario Hydro, so that the people of this province, the ratepayers of this province, will have the knowledge they need to make decisions with respect to the proper management of those very important assets.

I conclude my remarks and will yield the floor to my colleagues by saying that we are committed to fixing the mess we've been left. We're taking responsible steps. I am convinced that when we are finished, this province will be safer, better, have more electricity, favourably priced, and people can be reliably assured that the power will continue to come on for them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I always like to stand up in this place to represent my great riding of London-Fanshawe. Today I am pleased to speak—

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Frank Mazzilli was better.

Mr Ramal: That's OK. We're still friends. I think he did a good job in this area, and it's my turn now. Thank you, Mr O'Toole.

I am honoured to speak in support of Bill 15 for many reasons. First, the bill fulfills another Liberal commitment to the people of this province to make sure they know how much money the people who work for the government make, especially when they make over \$100,000. This bill ensures that publicly owned power companies are subject to salary disclosure laws. We are doing this differently than past governments, which tried to hide all the salaries from the people of Ontario and gave high salaries to their friends to please them or help them make more money.

Our government's agenda of positive change will mean that Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One will operate in an atmosphere of transparency and accountability. That's why I'm honoured to speak in support of this bill. We all know this is how Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One were operated by the former Conservative government. It's true, unlike other provincially owned operations, OPG and Hydro One employees have not been required to disclose salaries under the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act since 1999.

In recent months, I have learned about a lot of things going on in these companies, which have taken the hard-earned tax money from the people who work hard in this province and given it to their friends. I just spoke last week on that subject, since I learned information from the *Globe and Mail* about how the past government gave their friends money left and right, without any accountability or transparency. I will give two examples. Mr Paul Rhodes was paid \$15,000 a month to produce a few papers for that company. Also, Michael Gourley was paid \$105,000 to produce a one-page e-mail. Nobody asked him to produce any more.

Also, I have a question to the past government. They complain about that bill and our accountability and transparency, when we're trying to help the people of this province, trying to use their money effectively and wisely, to make sure we have good health care and good energy, to make sure every household in the province receives efficient electricity.

The past government paid \$2 million to the CEO of Hydro One. Before that, when the company was subject to the release of information, the CEO was receiving \$520,000. You see the difference? They want to keep that company closed and hide all the information from the people of this province just to please their friends and keep it as a company owned by the Conservative Party and the past government. That's unacceptable, because the people of this province work hard and pay taxes to enhance our education system, our health care system and our social programs.

I'm glad this government is committed to making sure that Ontarians know what they are paying for hydro and how their money is being managed. Hydro One and OPG are provincially owned assets, and those companies should be controlled and subject to all the information for the public of this province, to enhance them and to invest more money, unlike the other government. For the last eight years, they never invested one penny in order to

update those companies and buy more equipment to serve the people of this province.

1600

I was surprised when the honourable member from Durham was speaking about broken promises. He forgot what he was talking about: adjusting the rate to clean the up the mess created by the past government, which affected our government, our province, which we have to clean up: \$850 million, and he's complaining about that.

He was talking about the vulnerable people. He was talking about the people who live on assistance. He forgot they kept all the information secret from the public of this province and they gave their friends money left and right. At the same time he was talking about the vulnerable people of this province, they made sure to cut ODSP and cut the people living on government assistance by 21%. Now he comes today and he is talking in support of those people. When he was in government, he never thought about those people. He thought it was correct and right in order to save money. He forgot about their friends who were taking the money from OPG and Hydro One to support their own agenda.

Our government is going to operate in a different manner and a different fashion because we'll believe in these people and the people of Ontario. Our government is going to make sure that all the money we collect from the province, every penny from the taxpayers, can be invested back in the people of this province, updating hydro and the education system, enhancing health care, while also trying to spend the money wisely and efficiently.

I believe our honourable Minister of Energy is trying to do the best to protect the people in this province by introducing Bill 15. The bill will make sure every penny is spent wisely. I'm not just talking about the past government; I'm talking about the present government and the future government, because the people of this province have a right to know how their money is being spent. I am honoured to continue to support that bill because it's going to enhance and invest more money in our generation.

Also, I support the Minister of Energy when he was talking about conservation, because all the provinces of this country have that program except this province. As he mentioned, the Conservatives and NDP refused to support this program because they wanted to make sure that only their friends benefit from those corporations. They don't care about the people of this province.

I think we're going in the right direction. The Dalton McGuinty government and the Minister of Energy and his administration are going in the right direction in order to have efficient hydro and to have every penny in this government spent wisely, earnestly, accountably and with transparency, without any problem.

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): First of all, I think there are a number of issues that are encompassed with this bill, Bill 15, An Act to amend the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act. I think there are a number of aspects that this touches upon: things like access, dis-

closure, accountability, transparency, openness, the full scrutiny of the law, consistency, the public trust, and having an informed citizenry. I believe it's in this mandate of the McGuinty government that there is a new level, a new bar being set for standards of ethics, as well as a protocol of respect for parliamentary democracy. I think that is really the underlying premise of the bill we are seeking to present here.

Through you, Speaker, to the people of Ontario, it's important for them to realize that the manner in which particular successor corporations of the government of Ontario—specifically, Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One—have been funded or contracted, or how some of their consultants had been paid, is really not up to scratch—

Interjection.

Mr Qaadri: —with due respect to the MPP for Durham, who is perhaps reluctant to have the full light of day shed upon these aspects. I think this is something our government, with its proviso of putting people first, is really seeking to bring forth, again in the spirit of disclosure and full accountability.

To explain to the people of Ontario, there are already provisions that exist in what we call the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act: Individuals who are earning more than \$100,000 a year are required to disclose that fact. Somehow, perhaps for reasons best left unpronounced by the former government, that particular clause—those particular requirements, constraints and protocols—were removed from the successor corporations of Ontario Hydro, specifically Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One. My government, in an effort to bring the full light of day, full scrutiny, and as well maintaining consistency with other realms in the public service, is again imposing the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act to the full extent of the law to these private fiefdoms, it seems, Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One.

I speak to you, Speaker, about the secrecy—what I would perhaps call the crony capitalism—that was really practised by the various powers that be at Ontario Power Generation and their paymasters. The honourable Minister of Energy, Dwight Duncan, called it a private fiefdom, or, as my colleague the MPP for London-Fanshawe just said, it seemed to be a private company owned and operated for the exclusive purposes of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. I think the people of Ontario deserve to know, again in the full light of day, the number of backroom deals that occurred, and the private, untendered, non-arm's-length—not even finger-length—contracts that were awarded really need to be disclosed. Again, this is in an effort to bring consistency and uniformity with other crown agencies, crown corporations and publicly funded corporations run by the government of Ontario.

With your permission, Speaker, I would like to for a moment quote from the January 17, 1961, farewell address by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. I bring this quote to the attention of this House to really highlight the importance of disclosure and also what can go wrong

when powerful individuals reward their own without the full light of day. He said:

"This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence—economic, political, even spiritual—is felt in every city, every state-house, every office of the federal government," and no doubt also by the MPP for Durham. "We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications....

"In the councils of government we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex"—a phrase, Speaker, as you will note, that has taken on icon status of its own. "The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.

"We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals so that security and liberty may prosper together."

1610

That was 1961, President Dwight D. Eisenhower in his farewell address. Even though this was more than a generation ago, it seems that the previous regime, the previous government, the previous Tory-led government has still to ingest that lesson, has still to learn that lesson.

I would like to offer some particular examples of the mismanagement, the crony capitalism, the secret patronage that violated every law, both written and understood, for the government of Ontario to achieve value for its taxpaying dollar.

For example, \$276,000 was allocated for travel expenses for the former chairman of OPG; \$225,000, probably enough for eight trips around the world, was paid for communications material totalling something on the order of 10 pages; \$10,000, Speaker, of your money and mine and that of the people of Ontario, their tax-paying, hard-earned dollars, was paid for ground transportation in no less cities than Paris or Rome for a former cabinet minister, a Tory cabinet minister; and, perhaps especially egregiously, \$30,000 was paid per week—for what?—for strategic advice on the privatization of hydro.

But the great winner in all of this, the crowning achievement of the crony capitalist regime, was one Michael Gourley. He, as you may recall, is currently, first of all, I understand, a resident of the Turks and Caicos Islands, perhaps well spending his \$4.6 million that he was awarded under the crony capitalist department of the previous regime.

I quote from the *Globe and Mail*: "Michael Gourley, a Tory insider who received \$105,000 from Hydro One under an untendered contract for which the utility received only a one-page written record, says he worked hard for his pay because he also presented the company with oral advice....

"Among the records were instructions on how the chairman of Hydro One, Sir Graham Day, should feign

flattery of Mr Harris to encourage the Premier to agree with the sale"—that is, the privatization of Hydro—"as well as advice by Mr Long and Mr Toogood"—truly his works and efforts were too good—"that the utility's shares should be deliberately underpriced so that investors would make easy money purchasing the stock."

It is a new day in Ontario, and it is the McGuinty government and the McGuinty vision that seeks to bring access and disclosure and accountability and transparency and renewed trust in the public domain. The successor companies to Ontario Hydro, Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One, are now in a new day of light being held to a higher standard of ethics, one that I might add has been sorely missing in the province of Ontario for years and years past.

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): It's my pleasure to rise and speak about Bill 15, the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act. This piece of legislation was actually passed in 1996. The Minister of Finance each spring under this act produces a compendium of all public sector employees who are paid \$100,000 or more in the previous year. This disclosure applies to the provincial government and to its crown agencies and corporations and publicly funded organizations such as hospitals, municipalities, school boards, universities and colleges.

I am speaking today about Bill 15 and an accompanying change to freedom of information regulations. These actions demonstrate that a core commitment of the McGuinty government is to transparency and accountability. We pledge to make all provincially owned power companies subject to freedom of information and salary disclosure laws. Bill 15 and changes to freedom of information fulfill another promise of this government.

But I would like this House and the public to see these actions in a much wider context than in those that affect just Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation. Yes, there is a need for much more transparency and integrity at Ontario Hydro and at Ontario Power Generation, and Bill 15 and freedom of information changes will bring an end to the secrecy that has been par for the course in these companies. But the broader context of which I speak was outlined in the article last week in the *Toronto Star* that quoted John Kenneth Galbraith.

Mr Galbraith, at 95, has seen it all for almost a century. He says that the current era may very well be remembered for its economic scandals. Mr Galbraith, I hasten to add, was actually speaking about the US accounting scandals, but we all know his comments cannot be confined to our southern neighbours. I think I paraphrase Mr Galbraith accurately when I say corporations, including Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation, have seen the passage of power from the investors and the board of directors to management. As part of the passage, management has been allowed to design and implement "its own set of priorities, including, among other things, compensation for itself." We, the investors and the public, are only just learning about these things. Galbraith's view is that, "This compensation often

amounts to 'rewards that verge on larceny.'" Mr Galbraith says the blame really belongs back to the lack of ethics in some of the management, but also to the structure that has evolved within business. He says—

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Is she talking about the Liberal federal sponsorship—

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order. The floor goes to Etobicoke Centre.

Mrs Cansfield: Maybe if the member from Rainy River would listen, he might learn something. Instead of all the chatting that seems to be going on, if he started to listen, he might in fact learn.

Mr Galbraith says the blame goes back, as I said, not just to the lack of ethics in some management but to the structure that has actually evolved within business. He says that unless the importance of this power shift is recognized by the public, reforms will remain inadequate. When I apply this thinking to our situation in government, I can see the truth in much of what Mr Galbraith has to say. We have allowed a structural change, and the public has not been aware of its consequences until just recently.

The changes we offer to Bill 15 and the freedom of information regulations are not only reforms of the structure but are steps that will ensure that the public does recognize the importance of reversing the errors of the structural change that is in place. They will let the public see the moments when executives and governors do not put first the interests of the company and its customers.

Mr Galbraith offers us all some very good, very sound advice. He says, "There must be surveillance of the reputable enterprise and general attention to managerial self-reward." As he indicates, and as we all know, it will be very difficult to apply that surveillance. He says that directors can't be relied on totally because they have been too willing to rubber-stamp management decisions and actions. Haven't we seen a lot of that? The investing public likewise is unable to deal with the complexity and specialization of the modern corporation and cannot be the ultimate watchdog. So it's obvious that all of must work together as ministers, members of Parliament, consumers, taxpayers, investors and advocates to keep a close watch, and we can only do this if we remove unreasonable secrecy from the corporations themselves.

1630

I'm not talking today about scandals. I'm not going to unveil the litany of questionable dealings by Hydro One and OPG. I'm not accusing management of scandalous behaviour. I'm not going to throw rocks. I'm building a foundation for a greater trust in one of our most important corporations. I'm speaking today about ways to apply the surveillance that Mr Galbraith says is so important for effective governance. He spoke of public corporations owned by shareholders. On paper, Hydro One and OPG have only one shareholder, the province of Ontario. In fact, there are about 12,112,000 shareholders, the total population of our province. These 12 million shareholders will find it much more difficult than other share-

holders to understand what is happening at Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation because they don't receive annual reports and, of course, they don't attend stockholder meetings. They must rely on us, members of Parliament, the government, as their only proxy to keep close watch on these companies and to protect their interests, the interests of Ontarians, these 12,112,000 people. Doesn't this give us a much more onerous task than the directors of any other public company? Of course it does. Are we not more responsible for surveillance, not less? Is it not more important then that all of us in government have an absolute duty to be more resolute, more demanding and more ethical than any other shareholder or director?

I, for one, do not want to be counted by Mr Galbraith as one of those directors who took a free lunch and rubber-stamped the decisions of the most public companies of all. This is why I believe so strongly in ending the secrecy and complexity of Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation with measures like Bill 15 and the freedom of information changes. With these measures, the operations of these companies will no longer be hidden and protected from the view of their single shareholder, this government, from all the eyes of the people of Ontario. As we do our utmost to keep the lights on in our hospitals, schools, businesses and homes, we should do our utmost to shine the light of integrity on all the operations of those companies that create and distribute our power.

The Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act was passed in 1996 and, as I indicated, each spring a compendium of public sector employees were paid. Unlike other provincially owned companies, Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation employees have not been required to disclose salaries under the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act. This decision was taken by the previous government after its 1998 restructuring of Ontario Hydro.

I refer you back, actually, to two comments that I would like to speak to. One was in November 1999, and it was the Premier of this province. As he indicated, "As an additional step towards open and accountable government, I announced last week that we will require full public disclosure of salaries and benefits paid to senior employees in the public sector, starting with salaries for the 1995 calendar year." We had, in fact, a previous government who believed in that disclosure, who felt that that disclosure should be there and should be recognized.

So where are we today? What has changed? Part of that change is that we now need to change what happened with the structure change within Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation. Through Bill 15, Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One will be subject to the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, and disclosures will be made retroactive back to 1999. Under the retroactivity of Bill 15, disclosure for the years from 1999 through 2003 will be required within one month of the bill receiving royal assent.

In addition to Bill 15, we have changed regulations pursuant to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act to ensure that the activities of Hydro One

and Ontario Power Generation are subject to freedom of information requests. Proper safeguards will be in effect to protect the truly confidential information of the corporations. Freedom of information will apply to Hydro One, Ontario Power Generation and their subsidiaries in a retrospective manner. This means that an individual may make an access request under freedom of information for records within the custody and control of the corporation, even where the records may have been created before freedom of information is applied.

The Information and Privacy Commissioner has long been an advocate of ensuring transparency and accountability. We continue to look to the commissioner for comments and suggestions as we work to ensure greater transparency and accountability.

Mr Hampton: I hope you're going to send a copy of this speech to Paul Martin. He probably needs to read it.

Mrs Cansfield: Actually, if I have to send one to Mr Martin, I'll also send one across the aisle to my colleague from Rainy River so that he may have an opportunity to read what he's been talking through for the last 15 minutes.

The McGuinty government believes transparency and accountability are the best safeguards of public service. We have a good deal of company. A good Tory by the name of the Honourable Michael Wilson, who is the chairman of the Canadian Coalition for Good Governance, said in a speech in February, "In terms of best practices, we encourage companies to provide complete disclosure on compensation. This would include not only total cash paid and options issued, but other forms of compensation such as restricted share units and any performance criteria."

This is what Bill 15 will require from Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation. The executive and the directors should have no fear of the new legislation. Let me repeat that proper standards will be in effect to truly protect confidential information of the corporations. In general terms, we believe corporate planners should have a reasonable right to confidentiality and the expectation of personal privacy when they sit around the table to discuss the directions, policies, processes and practices of the company. They must have reasonable confidentiality attached to negotiations that are in process. They must be allowed to speculate about the future without being second-guessed to distraction. Directors, executives and managers must be allowed to formulate corporate opinions. However, when planning yields decisions, when negotiations become agreements, when speculation and opinion become the roadmap and hallmark of the corporation, these things will be disclosed to the public, and how they came to be should be subject to public scrutiny.

I'm not making accusations today but I can observe that secrecy inevitably creates a dark night that gives strength to those with weak ethics and irresistible temptation to those who are greedy. We cannot allow anyone to come into the night to take what they do not deserve from the homes of children, the elderly, the needy and, for that matter, the rest of us.

First, we will end the secrecy that shrouds compensation. This will help address the structural shift that Mr Galbraith criticizes so vehemently and that has so weakened good governance worldwide. Bill 15 and the freedom-of-information regulation changes will bring more light to the governance of these vital corporations. They will ensure that the same rules apply to Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One as to other crown agencies, corporations and publicly funded organizations. We will make certain that some of the money we will force Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation to spend more wisely will go to initiatives that include aggressive conservation, new and greener sources of supply and an accountability to help us meet our objectives of cleaner air, consumer protection and a sustainable supply of electricity for generations to come.

This bill is an important and integral part of the stand of the Liberal government. It means we'll be able to take the dollars and apply them to health, education, our seniors and long-term care. It will make a difference in terms of the compensation that will come. It will make a difference in terms of what will happen in the future for the children in this province. We will be able to put in place and effect those initiatives that our Minister of Health has spoken about. We will be able to look forward to the issue of new supply, which my minister, Minister Dwight Duncan, has spoken about.

I think what is probably the most important thing of all is to put some trust back into what the people of Ontario have been missing for some period of time. There is no question, when you speak to the people in your riding, that there is a concern about, "Is it true what you say you're going to do, you're going to do?" This government is committed to the comments it has made, to the directions it has taken. It has a Premier who is standing behind its position in terms of what has been committed to the people in this province. In order to do that, we have to deal with the \$5.6-billion deficit. In order to do that, we have to make sure that disclosure is there and that it's transparent and full to the public.

To do that, we must clean up our own house, in order for the people of Ontario to feel that they can have the trust in the members of Parliament who make the decisions for today and for the future of their children. This isn't going to be easy. Nobody ever said it would be. Part of our responsibilities, our obligations and our rights, for that matter, is to ensure that the financial ability of this province is sound, and that people can depend not just on today or tomorrow but on months and years to come. It's an integral part of what each of us wants in our own families and in our own homes: that kind of stability as we move forward. That's the kind of stability we're going to present in this government, and we start with something that brings forward the trust of the people through the disclosure and the transparency of Bill 15.

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I go back and remind everyone that when this bill first came, in 1995, it was the Deputy Premier of the province who stood in this House—the record is in Hansard—and

so eloquently stated the need for transparency, openness, public disclosure, and in fact included in his comments agencies such as Ontario Hydro. What happened? What happened between 1995 and 1999? What happened was that we put a shroud of secrecy around something that was happening that should have been transparent. Now we're going to open that up and allow people within this province to listen to what a previous Deputy Premier of this province said—I can read you Hansard if you'd like—that he would bring forward a transparent, open process for public disclosure, and included Ontario Hydro. What happened between 1995 and 1999 is up for the scrutiny of the public. I think it came about during an election. Having said that, the fact of the matter is that it can't be all that different for the members across the way to feel any different from the way I do on this side, because they voted for that public disclosure back in 1996. As I read Hansard and I look at the number of people who supported that public disclosure act, I believe it was unanimous on the side of Mr Eves's government.

When you read Hansard, it's interesting, some of the things you come upon. I'm going to quote Mrs Marland, who was speaking to the bill as well, on December 12, 1995: "For you to say that it's too bad you had to force this, you're quite right. It's too bad that you had to reduce yourselves to the kind of behaviour that was demonstrated in this chamber last week. We pray that the lowering of the standards and the absolute, total disrespect for what Parliament and the seat of government in this province has stood for for 200 years, whatever number of years it is—the fact is that we will never see that kind of degradation again in this chamber because we will not permit it. I can assure you of that." That's a quote. Ladies and gentlemen, I think it's time for change.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon and make a few comments on this particular piece of legislation. It's really interesting to listen to the comments of the Liberal speakers. I guess we want to call them today the perfect people with hydro, listening to Mr Duncan's statements as he tried to deflect some criticism this afternoon. Obviously, your whole policy is an exact duplication of what Jim Wilson, the former minister, had introduced under the Energy Competition Act when it broke up Hydro and looked at privatization etc. Of course, the Liberals all along—and you know it yourself—many of you have supported the trends and the policies of the former government.

I think what this act today is about is a bit of a deflection. Obviously you're trying to criticize and demonize our government. You still don't understand that you are the government now and you actually have to govern. Instead of trying to demonize us, what you're trying to do is deflect the issues away from your broken promises and away from the Chrétien-Martin Liberals in Ottawa, which of course, has been disgraceful. I haven't heard one of the speakers this afternoon, in the last hour, mention one thing about the corruption and the party policies, the party friends who have been rewarded very

heavily with the Chrétien-Martin Liberals. Now Mr Martin is trying to deflect it. You'd almost think Mr Martin had never been part of the corruption that went on in the last 10 years. Naturally he was part of it. He was the sergeant-at-arms.

So here we are, trying to deflect the problems that this government faces. Six months they've been in power and they're still trying to demonize the former government. The fact of the matter is they have broken numerous promises to the citizens of the province and they're feeling it very much. We know that in their cabinet and we know that in their caucus, members are feeling the pressures of the broken promises.

Mr Hampton: On behalf of New Democrats, I really want to respond to the revisionist statements of the Minister of Energy. Every time he speaks he tries to rewrite history. I simply want to quote from Hansard so that I can help him to correct his record.

The Minister of Energy would have us believe that all of the Liberals were oh, so in favour of purchasing electricity from Manitoba. But I have this quote, April 30th, 1992, when the then Liberal energy critic, someone named Dalton McGuinty, said, "We now know it is cheaper to produce this electricity in the province than it is to buy it from Manitoba. We now know that if we cancel the deal today, it's going to cost us \$82 million, but if we wait until the end of the environmental assessment hearing, it's going to cost us over \$200 million."

Who was the most ardent critic of purchasing electricity from Manitoba? None other than Dalton McGuinty, the Liberal energy critic.

The Minister of Energy wants to talk a good game about energy conservation. When the NDP government introduced an aggressive energy efficiency strategy in the early 1990s, what did Dalton McGuinty have to say? He said, "We are struggling under the weight of a recession and the government's policy of conservation is going to cause rates to go up."

Dalton McGuinty was opposed to energy conservation, opposed to energy efficiency. As much as you Liberals try to rewrite history, it's all here in Hansard. We're all in favour of openness, but I remember it was Liberals who were in favour of this policy of privatization, which led down this very road.

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I'm pleased to stand today and speak in support of Bill 15, An Act to amend the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Amendment Act. The bill demonstrates our government's firm commitment to openness, accountability and transparency, because we know that that is the best way to protect our so vital public services. Ontarians, like those in my riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, have a right to know how their government spends their money. But most importantly, they have a right to be assured that their hard-earned tax dollars are being spent in the wisest way to get the best value for those tax dollars.

The lack of transparency and accountability under the former government at OPG and Hydro One led to a

serious waste of public funds. Hearing what has happened at OPG and Hydro One shocks all of us. It is a topic of discussion in our communities and we are working hard and taking action in this government to clean up the mess that's left behind. We are not going to treat OPG and Hydro One like our own private country club. Gone are the days when our friends will be given contracts simply because they know someone at Queen's Park.

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It is crucial that, as we move forward, we acknowledge the importance of keeping the lights on across this province. I recently had an opportunity to speak to the industrial employers' association in my own community, and they are extremely concerned that we will ensure that we have energy in this province, that we have a responsible plan to ensure that the lights stay on in Ontario. If the lights can stay on in Ontario and we can have a sustainable and reliable supply of energy, our economy will prosper and our families will have a stronger Ontario in which to grow. This piece of legislation is a firm step in the government's taking action to ensure the future of our province. We are proud of Bill 15 and look forward to the opposition supporting it as well.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Durham has two minutes.

Mr O'Toole: It's going to be a pleasure in the next few minutes to have the opportunity to respond to the Minister of Energy. But in this brief time I have here now, I think it's really important to respond to the member from Kenora-Rainy River, leader of the third party, who has been here for some time. In fact, he just pointed out a few things from history and the record of the absolute contradictions we hear from the present government. When they're in opposition they say one thing, when they're in an election mode they say another thing, and then they do what they want. Talk about accountability. This is not the government of accountability. They're the government that actually set standards that are so low that there is no accountability. That was clear in evidence today, and I'll speak more of that in a couple of minutes.

But I really just want to spend a bit of time to look at the current debate. I did hear from the members from London-Fanshawe, Etobicoke North and Etobicoke Centre. I think the most cogent debate was around the member for Etobicoke Centre, who is the parliamentary assistant to energy and I believe has a very polite and respectful way of dealing with this debate.

In my view, this Bill 15, if you look at it and examine it, has a couple of things in it that are setting the pace. This government is setting a pace that everything is retroactivity. In fact, if you look at the full debate, Mr Speaker, in which you were a member of the opposition at the time, they voted in favour of the public sector disclosure act. And now they're kind of—I don't get the point of it all. In fact, if you look at the full debate and how the commercialization occurred under the Macdonald commission report and the subsequent

reorganization of hydro, and if you now look at the Manley report, you're going to see that once again they're reversing themselves at every corner. There will be more to be said, and I invite those viewing today and listening to stay tuned. I'm going to uncover the mystery of the Liberal government that you can't trust.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Etobicoke Centre has two minutes to respond.

Mrs Cansfield: I would like to thank the members from Simcoe North, Rainy River, Etobicoke South and Durham. All of them spoke of the need to learn from the past and move on to the future. I think it's really important that they have acknowledged and recognized that there are changes that need to take place. I think it's important that we learn, as we have heard, about the lessons of the past, because if you don't learn the lessons from the past, you're doomed to repeat them in the future. I think that's an imperative lesson we learn in the House as we listen to the debate across the room. I often wish there were more debate and less rhetoric and definitely less chatter. I'm looking forward to that opportunity to be able to stand and have that type of debate and to listen to and learn from my colleagues across the way, as well as my colleagues who have been seasoned in the House.

So, on behalf of the minister, Bill 15 will move forward. It will in fact be a bill that represents the transparency and the openness that we've made a commitment to in this government. It will in fact deal with the disclosures that need to be made. It will in fact allow the shareholders in Ontario—many of whom, as I said, don't go to annual general meetings or get reports—an opportunity to see and to view as they choose, and in fact they may ask and they may request. That hasn't happened for the last few years. That's the openness, that's the transparency, and ultimately that's the change.

I thank each of you for your comments.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I do ask your indulgence to bring forward a point of personal privilege. It is—if I could direct you to explain why I haven't given notice—with respect to section 21:

“(a) Privileges are the rights enjoyed by the House collectively and by members of the House individually conferred by the Legislative Assembly Act and other statutes, or by practice, precedent, usage and custom.” It's on page 18.

“(b) Once the Speaker finds that a prima facie case of privilege exists it shall be taken into consideration immediately.

“(c) Any member proposing to raise a point of privilege,”—this is the important part—“other than one arising out of proceedings in the chamber during the course of a sessional day, shall give the Speaker a written statement of the point at least one hour prior to raising the question” of privilege.

“(d)”—it talks about your ability to rule. This is about a point of privilege arising out of the proceedings in this place.

I refer to another document, the House of Commons Procedure and Practice, edited by Robert Marleau and Camille Montpetit, published in 2000. Chapter 11, with respect to questions and privilege: "The right to seek information from the ministry of the day and the right to hold that ministry accountable are recognized as two of the fundamental principles of parliamentary government.... The importance of questions within the parliamentary system cannot be overemphasized, and the search for or clarification of information ... is a vital aspect of the duties undertaken by individual members."

Mr Speaker, we have been raising questions in this place for five days.

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Mr Baird: It's not a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: It's not a point of privilege, in my view.

Mr Baird: Can I finish making it?

The Deputy Speaker: If you're referring to question period and questions and answers, I don't believe it to—

Mr Baird: I'm just giving a preface.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll give you a few more minutes.

Mr Baird: I appreciate your indulgence. This is a serious issue.

Members of this place come here. One of our primary responsibilities—this legislative branch—is to hold that executive branch accountable. In numerous attempts—I gave you the background of five days' worth of question periods, of the standing committee on government agencies, on March 1, March 24. Then again today, it was revealed that another member had been "charged with putting the government line on a committee." We were not able to hold this government of the day accountable, which is a fundamental part of our responsibilities—

The Deputy Speaker: Will the member please take his seat? I don't find what you've raised under section 21 a prima facie case of privilege.

We'll go on with further debate. Further debate?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm calling the member from Nepean-Carleton to order. Further debate?

Mr O'Toole: I'm somewhat shocked at the expedient ruling by the Deputy Speaker on the member from Nepean-Carleton.

The Deputy Speaker: We're ready to debate Bill 15. If you're ready to debate Bill 15, get on with it.

Mr O'Toole: Out of respect, I certainly will begin with Bill 15, which you can see for those viewing is really a very minor bill. Its real intent is somewhat an inside issue in terms of what really is afoot.

I really believe that in my remarks the best place to start is to look at the issue of the restructuring of OPG or Hydro One, in fact the whole electricity market—a long-standing debate, I might say, on that. All parties have had a role, everybody from Maurice Strong and the rainforest to the current John Manley.

Mr Hampton: John, there never was a rainforest.

Mr O'Toole: Well, I know.

The point that I'm making is that all parties have had their spin on this thing, and currently I believe Mr Duncan is charging in under Bill 15 under proper disclosure. You would know, Mr Speaker, because you were a member of the opposition at the time, that this House fully agreed in 1996 with the Public Sector Disclosure Act. You voted for it. You agreed with it. It's our concept.

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I can tell you, on this side of the House, public sector disclosure: we agree; end of debate. But if you want to impugn motive and you want to drag this thing through the treachery of the messaging behind this bill, you only have to look at the back section here, section 2 of the bill. In fact, there's a small clerical error in this bill. In subsection 2(6), it says:

"Hydro One Inc, Ontario Power Generation Inc and their subsidiaries shall do the following things with respect to 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003:

"1. Each employer shall make available for inspection by the public without charge a written record of the amount of salary and benefits paid in each year by the employer to or in respect of an employee to whom the employer paid at least \$100,000 as salary. Subsection (2) applies with respect to the record."

Here's the point: "It must be made available on or before the later of March 31, 2004, and the day that is one month after the date on which the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Amendment Act, 2003, receives Royal Assent." They've already missed the date. In fact, on the order paper they've spent a lot of time on issues that aren't—if this is an important fact, they've missed the date.

But there's the retroactivity nature. They did it with the campground association, they've done it with private schools and those parents sending their children to religious schools. The whole retroactivity nature of this bill: In their high-mindedness, they think they have the only answer. The people of Ontario know that of 230 promises, you'll be lucky if they deliver on two of those 230 promises. It'll just be a bunch of Liberal rhetoric, the same as we get from Ottawa.

What were the first initiatives made by the now government in comparison to their promises? Again, they talk about accountability and they talk about transparency, but the very first thing they did in the energy file was break a promise. All the way along they voted for the price freeze of 4.3 cents, all through the election, to assure the farmers, to assure the people on fixed incomes, "No, we're not going to do anything." The very first thing they did was raise taxes. In fact, they raised the price without any consultation with the electorate at all. I find that retroactive, I find it regressive and I find it purely stylized liberalism for saying one thing before the election and something completely different after the election.

What's the second litany of errors on the energy file? I believe the second litany, as has been pointed out by Mr Hampton today, is that their position on the water power

contract with Manitoba is another example of what I'd call Liberal chicanery—or "obfuscation" is a better word.

In fact, this whole file is riddled with contradictions. The third thing they did was hire their first consultant, Peter Donolo. That consultant was hired despite the fact they promised not to hire consultants.

Mr Baird: A Liberal consultant, a Liberal hack.

Mr O'Toole: A Liberal consultant. As far as I'm concerned—I won't even get into that part of it.

The fourth thing they did was hire another consultant. Who was that consultant? None other than the guy who's in charge of the whole sponsorship scandal, John Manley, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, who certainly would have known about all of Sheila's audit reports. Guess what? Not only is he the author of their policy called the Manley Report, clearly he's still an MP collecting that salary. Who is he serving? He's serving Dalton, his kissin' cousin.

Honestly, where is the benchmark? Where is the standard? As the member from Nepean-Carleton tried to bring out today, we have relentlessly tried to hold the standards, to find out what the standards of accountability are. What have we done? In questions to the leader, all he does is pull out the Integrity Commissioner's letter day after day. We've all seen it. We've all read it. We know it isn't even related to the question. But for the people at home, the people reading and the media, he's just lulling them to sleep, while at the same time, somebody in the Ontario Securities Commission, the people in the marketplace, are concerned about accountability.

I can only say to you that I honestly think the whole issue and the frustration experienced by the general government committee today, dominated by the Liberals to shut down any further debate on Mr Sorbara, causes me to lose complete confidence in the process itself.

I'm worried, because tomorrow, April Fool's Day, the Liberals are going to skyrocket prices for the senior citizens of this province, a 9% to 27% increase, and that's only the electricity charge. The local distributors are going to be charging more, probably another 10%.

For me—and I take this file extremely seriously on a policy level, not a political level—I honestly feel that what we've got to do is allow this House to talk about ethical standards, accountability and transparency, not under the guise of Bill 15, which is what we're actually talking about, but in the context of what happened today.

It was a sad day for democracy today when they shut down general government from trying to hold Mr Sorbara accountable for his wrongdoings, orchestrated right from the minions in the Premier's office—no question about it. I want to accost Mr Levac, the whip.

When I look at the Liberal election promises, what did Mr McGuinty say? This is the apple pie and corn flakes stuff here; this is in the Liberal election document, which you'd be well aware of—it's a book of conundrums. He said: "MPPs used to be respected representatives of the people. Now they are bit players manipulated to the bidding of the Premier and unelected minions."

Mr Smitherman, now the Minister of Health, is wrenching all the power from those volunteer boards with Bill 8. Here's a case where the whip today, Mr Levac, told the six members on that committee how to vote. What did they do? They voted against democracy.

So I feel frustrated. I feel exasperated that we can't have a full debate on this thing. I really feel it's disrespectful. Quite honestly, if I reflect on this with any passion, it shows contempt, it shows arrogance, it shows disrespect for the people of Ontario. I'm heartbroken. At least if we made mistakes, we stood there and took our punishment.

Mr Smitherman is wrecking health care, the Minister of Transportation with photo radar—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr O'Toole: I just don't get it. I look at the promises, and quite honestly, Mr Speaker, I know you to be a man of integrity, but you are ruling in the chair and I hope that you, with your indulgence, would allow me to bring some severe sincerity to this discussion.

Laughter.

Mr O'Toole: They're laughing. In fact, Mr Quadra, from Etobicoke North, is laughing.

Mr Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): Qaadri.

Mr O'Toole: Whatever.

I apologize if I mispronounced your name, but honest to God, when he spoke today, he was citing all these American experiences. The citations were all American-based, and I look at some of the people, the minions running the Premier's office. They're all frigging Americans or they're deserting the federal ship. It's starting to concern me, as it should.

Mr Qaadri: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: There are several infringements: First, the mispronunciation of the name, which you're not actually supposed to take—

The Deputy Speaker: Get to the point of order.

Mr Qaadri: —and unparliamentary language, with "frigging," decrying an entire—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Will the member from Nepean-Carleton please quiet down. If the member would like to withdraw, I'll allow him to. I heard the word and I accepted it at the—

Mr O'Toole: I apologize. Being from a rural riding, I'm often able to use slang that—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Will the member please take his seat.

The member for Middlesex on a point of order.

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I take exception to the inference that if we're from rural communities, somehow we have an inability to express ourselves.

The Deputy Speaker: Folks, let's get back to the debate and do what we're paid to be here to do. The member for Durham.

Mr O'Toole: In the sincere tone I've assumed here today—I don't think of myself as academic in any way; I

just feel that the issue here is integrity, accountability and honesty. Everything I've heard here is to defer the real debate about ethics and accountability.

It's in that vein, Mr Speaker, that I move adjournment of the debate.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm getting a little impatient with the member for Nepean-Carleton.

The member for Durham has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1701 to 1731.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will stand and be counted by the table.

All those opposed will stand and be counted by the table.

You can be seated.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 2; the nays are 57.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

Mr O'Toole, you have the floor.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr O'Toole: Respectfully, it's difficult—I was so engaged in the debate on Bill 15. I brought up a couple of issues and I understand the Liberal government of the day didn't want to hear it.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr O'Toole: Again, they will hardly listen to the opposition today. That's the real issue. Not only did it occur in the general government committee, where they shut down any questioning of the Minister of Finance, who is going to present what I call the Sorbara bogus budget—this could have happened in May. It seems to me that being elected on being more democratic and more inclusive just isn't true. It's like the 230 promises. I'm afraid the people of Ontario were hoodwinked. It is absolutely saddening.

I have to go back to the substance of the debate. When I look at Bill 15, the retroactive nature of the bill is clearly one that is troubling. It's one thing to pass legislation going forward—you have every right, in fact you have the responsibility, to do it—but what you don't have is the right to retroactively affect people who are ill-prepared for the promises you made before the election and then for the sudden shift of the wind—to speak of wind power—after the election, when you do something different.

The fact is, under the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, you know full well that in 1996 you, Mr Bradley, and others, who were at that time in opposition—arguably, some would say you should be still—voted for it. You voted for it. I know this is possibly the most important debate of this session, the whole energy debate, because it's about consistency, reliability and

safety of supply. It's about affordability for the economic part of the economy.

Going back to Bill 15, with your indulgence, Mr Speaker, I have to talk for a few moments, and for those who have chosen to stay, and I do appreciate it, I'm going to give you a bit of history that I have read on the whole electricity issue. I just happened to read it. I want the people of Ontario to understand where we are, because at the stroke of midnight tonight, you're going to be paying about 20% more.

Think of the agricultural community, the people on supply management. Think about the dairy farmer. Think about the small delicatessen that has to keep the food safe. Think about the senior citizens. Think about the frail elderly, the people who are—dare I say it?—disabled or on a fixed income. It saddens me, the chicanery that's going on.

Before the election they said 4.3 cents. They voted for it. They ran on it. The very first thing they did was to increase the price of electricity. What was it? It was a tax by another name, a cash grab. They can argue about the cost of the stranded debt, but I think it's important to put some of the history on the record.

From 1906, when Sir Adam Beck began the generation of electricity in the public domain—1906, remember that—he said his big founding principle was power at cost. What he failed to say—in the 1970s and 1980s they made an important decision to go to nuclear, and since then there's never been a project come in on time or on budget. The litany continues today.

If you look today, a very good article was brought up by the member for Kenora-Rainy River. I'm using this as his reference. This article is from the National Post, March 31. The title is "Federal Nuclear Firm \$160 Million Over Budget on New Reactors"—and they're late. In fact, they're late by four years.

Tom Adams is a person I have a great deal of respect for. He wants to do the right thing. Tom Adams, the executive director of Energy Probe "warned taxpayers will still be at risk if Ontario chooses a nuclear solution to the electricity problem and then, to guard against cost overruns, signs guaranteed price contracts for new AECL reactors." Atomic Energy Canada Ltd is a crown corporation. The shareholder of record is the federal government.

I really feel that although my riding is in a heavily nuclear—Darlington and Pickering are within the limits of Durham region. I commend the workers, the front-line people, the workers on the front line. I can tell you that Pickering is a plant that's been fraught with political interference—there's no question of that—right from the beginning of time. If you look at the best example, Bruce Power is basically a partnership, and that partnership has been successful. I think Duncan Hawthorne is doing a good job there, and I think technically that decision is something Manley recommended.

I'm going to have to speak about Manley. I have to. I have the greatest respect. I say this with all respect. It's on the public record. I understand that Mr Manley was the

Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister and was a candidate for the leadership, replacing Jean Chrétien. Then he realized Paul Martin had the thing wrapped up. Dalton McGuinty bailed him out. He offered him another job. So he didn't do the honourable thing and resign. He was hired as a consultant to the current McGuinty government.

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I thought they weren't going to have consultants.

Mr O'Toole: You're right. That's absolutely right. Mr Yakabuski says the government made another promise, that they wouldn't hire consultants. Arguably that's the whole topic of this bill, Bill 15.

If you go over the history, I think the only government to really look in any serious way at the energy issue, the generation, transmission, distribution and consumption, was the Mike Harris government, difficult although it was. What did he do? I'll tell you just what he did. Yes, he did hire outside independent people to make sure they were at arm's length. Who did he hire? Donald Macdonald. Who was Donald Macdonald? He was Pierre Elliott Trudeau's Liberal finance minister. He was no crony of Mike Harris or anyone else. Macdonald brought his report in in 1996.

1740

The next major event that occurred in the restructuring of this problem was an all-party select committee called the NAOP committee, the nuclear asset optimization plan. On that all-party committee, who was the lead person representing the Liberal caucus? A person whom I have the greatest respect for—and I wouldn't mind if he was hired back as a consultant; in fact, he should be on one of the boards—Sean Conway. Sean Conway was on the committee. I believe the other members on the committee were Monte Kwinter or Gerry Phillips, or both of them, very respectable members.

In fact, Gerry Phillips should be the Minister of Finance and move Greg Sorbara out. Just get over the shadow that has stalled this House procedurally for the last two weeks. There is a shadow of ethical standards and principle. Why doesn't he just step aside? Yet there's a press release that Mr Sorbara actually told the now Premier, Mr McGuinty—Mr Sorbara, the president of the party, the guy with all the power technically, who chose most of these candidates single-handedly, basically told Dalton—Mr McGuinty, the Premier, respectfully—in fact, he waited 60 days to tell him. Talk about transparency. Yeah, right. He basically told him, before he'd done a few other things, that the corporation where he was the chair of the audit committee, that was being questioned, investigated by the Ontario Securities Commission—

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): What's this got to do with the bill that we're debating?

Mr O'Toole: The member from Guelph-Wellington—

Mr Baird: Transparency.

Mr O'Toole: Yeah, they don't get it. This demonstrates my issue here, that they still don't get that. They

talked during the election about democracy and accountability, yet it's just like all the 230 promises. They're not keeping one of them.

I really do think that Donald Macdonald did come up with a comprehensive report. Thank goodness at that time—I think Jim Wilson was the minister, and after that was Minister Baird. One of them—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: The youngest, obviously. But I remember he came to my riding and did speak to the main stakeholders of my riding, many knowledgeable people—Henry Sissons, Bob Strickert and others that I could mention—and, just for the sake of the record, did listen to them. The difficult decisions that the Minister of Energy today, Mr Duncan, has to make I think are important. In fact, I should put on the record that I'll be trying to support them, because this is about good policy, not bad politics. I can tell you on the record—I'm saying that now—I'll be supporting much of what's in Manley and your options and choices, whether it's the wind option or renewables in a general sense, to find a portfolio there and a price and a way of having the market not completely distort their economics, because they don't have the economies of scale right now.

The work done by the IIPA where they tried to implement the recovery plan, the current Candu reactor technology, needs to be examined. I say that respectfully, because I know Mr Manley, when he was industry minister, was the very guy trying to sell it. I look at Germany. Did Germany buy it? No. Did France buy it? No. Did any of the sophisticated powers looking at the nuclear option buy it? No. So how come Mr Manley now, the guy who's trying to sell it—he's probably part of the deal. This is the subtext of this debate. Mr Manley, who was the industry minister and very connected to the political elite, and still is, who probably wants to become the leader next time, after Paul does his one-term wonder—

Mr Baird: One term?

Mr O'Toole: That's what he said. One-term wonder. I'd say that Mr Manley will be back in the race and he'll be trying to sell us the same Candus—or Cannots, maybe. I would say there's almost a conflict of interest, because the submessage here is that the federal regulator, the Atomic Energy Control Board of Canada, in fact the designers and architects of the Canadian nuclear option—I believe Mr Manley, in his report, did say that they should consider all manufacturers of the nuclear option.

The next major thing was the white paper, then the Energy Competition Act. Now, under the competition act, you should recognize that under the commercial—what's the name of that act?

Mr Baird: Concentration.

Mr O'Toole: No, it's not commercial concentration; that's a whole different tax issue. Under commercial tax law, private companies don't have this disclosure part. When they were trying to consider commercialization—which, by the way, is one of Manley's recommendations, having partnerships—there isn't disclosure.

I'm going to refer to the Manley report now, because the readers will get discouraged that I'm not going to make this point in the limited time I have left.

In it, John Manley—I want to get this right. Recommendation number IV.3: “That board members be remunerated in line with remuneration paid to members of boards of comparable private sector entities.” So it's right in there that if it's Direct Energy or some other private sector, publicly traded, blah, blah, blah, shareholders, then it should be disclosed—and they should be paid the same, but he also says it should be disclosed.

I have no problem with disclosure, none whatsoever. I do always want to bring this debate back to: The opposition doesn't want to hear that our Ministers of Energy, Jim Wilson and, latterly, John Baird, had crafted some of the most far-reaching changes stemming back from 1995, as I've tried to point out, and in 1996 with the Macdonald report, latterly the white paper, the competition act, the opening of the market, and Bill 210, which capped the prices, which is really what we're talking about today and which you promised to do. You voted for it because everybody was getting swamped, as you will tomorrow. Actually, it probably won't get called till May, because people won't get their energy bills until a month later. When they get the bill, this is going to be long past. You'll be on to other things and you hope the voters are going to forget.

I'll tell you, I consider that people who are working in small business, and included in that is agriculture, and people on fixed incomes, whether they're seniors or other people who have a very low income, are being exposed here. That, to me, is probably the main message I want to say in light of the market opening up tomorrow at these newer, higher prices of 10% to 25% increases. That's the essence of today's discussion.

I have to commend the EDA, who are the voice of the local distribution companies. The EDA has got some serious restructuring costs as well. They want, and Minister Dwight Duncan has allowed, rate into the system under the distributor side. The local distribution company is going to allow rate into the system. You've allowed higher prices for the electrons into the system. That goes up, the more electricity you use.

There are very few tools. The consumer today is a price-taker. At your home, I do encourage conservation. I always have; I think we always should. Conservation is an important part of the solution, no question about it.

Today the consumer has no control—none. In fact, the last thing I read was that the Minister of Energy said they're going to allow consumers to buy an interval or time-of-rate meter. Those are available today. In fact, I think they should be allowed, because the consumer today—the person who's putting your bill in your house has no idea when you use electrons, if you use them at 8 o'clock in the morning or 8 at night, or 7 o'clock at night or 7 in the morning; they have no idea when you use electrons. So how can you charge them different prices unless there's a mechanism for determining when they use them? A time-of-rate meter is a solution I will support.

The solution I have a problem with is who's going to pay for them. Is that yet another cost to consumers who are already straining under the 10% to 30% increase in the price of electricity, and you're going to whack it to them again? What you've done here, and what you've done right from the beginning, since October 2, is increased taxes, increased fees. Now you've got photo radar. Pretty soon you're going to have red-light cameras. You're going to have Big Brother watching you and cleaning you out.

Where's the money going? I agree totally with accountability and transparency. I just think that if you really want to get to it—and no criticism intended here, of course, of Mr Manley because, as I said, in many regards I've completely read his report. In fact, I'm going to go through in the few minutes left what the readers should know.

There's recommendation III.6, “That OPG as a regulated company has a capital structure similar to other regulated commercial utilities.” That's subtext for privatization. I don't have a problem with that as long as they're regulated. As long as they're fully accountable, no problem.

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“Recommendation III.7: That as soon as practical the OPG board present a plan, with time frames, to the shareholder”—that's the taxpayers—“for reorganizing the company into two principal operating divisions and winding down non-core business units.”

There's another one here that's very important, IV.1: “That the OPG board consist of up to 12,” politically appointed, “directors ... by the province and that the directors”—what would be the names? I think it's just going to be another series of people—I encourage the backbench members and I encourage the parliamentary assistant to watch these appointments. There's got to be balance. I'll be watching it like a little hawk. I'm telling you, I don't care what political affiliation, as long as their principles and ethics are transparent. I have no problem with that at all, none at all, zero. In fact, I think you'll find me a friend for the most part. As I said earlier, this to me is about good policy. I don't believe you can have that without full public input, not just on prices but on all the changes. I'd like to serve in a constructive way on any committee that's trying to bring forward real public principles where the public comes first, the consumer of Ontario comes first.

“Recommendation IV.2: That the chair serve part-time.” I have no problem with that.

Recommendation IV.3 is that the board are paid like private companies. Yeah, right. That means they're going to have to be more like private companies, which is what this bill is about. What the heck is the problem?

“Recommendation IV.4: That when new directors are needed, a committee of the board of OPG develop for shareholder consideration a list of board needs and skills.” In fact, it's going to be—hopefully not—a political donor list.

"Recommendation IV.6: That OPG each year certify and disclose senior officer employment terms, compensation, benefits and expenses." I have no problem with that at all, but if the public sector does it, the question becomes, why doesn't the private sector do it? Is the private partner going to disclose? Are they going to be considered in other ways for compensating these members?

This is one I have a bit of a problem with. Maybe if the minister's here, and he's listening—"Recommendation IV.15: That a corporate 'governance officer'"—this is an interesting one—"be designated to assist OPG in managing governance related issues." That could be Mr Manley's future role. I have no idea. Since he's not running federally, he's sort of on leave with pay as an MP while he's engaged to write this very comprehensive report. Some would call that double-dipping. I shouldn't be so hard on him because I have the greatest respect for these guys who serve at great length.

"Recommendation 4.18: That the head office of OPG be reduced in size as much as possible as functions are moved to the two key operating divisions and, subject to cost-benefit analysis, be moved away from 700 University Avenue."

That's the complete dismantling of Sir Adam Beck's dream. If we had done it, there would be outrage in the streets. It's just like today. It's a sad day for democracy. It's this evening that's striking me, because the Orders of Ontario are being delivered downstairs. I have three people who I know very well who have served their community and I'd like to be there to respect that—Avis Glaze, the director of education for the Pine Ridge District School Board, and others who are very deserving.

I guess, technically, there's probably not going to be enough time to resolve a full debate on this. What I'm trying to establish here is that there's a long history. In summation, Donald Macdonald concluded that there was \$38 million in accumulated debt. If you look at the whole complex discussion on energy and generation and all this investment issue, you're going to find that Sir Adam Beck said power at cost. We have a \$38-billion debt. My conclusion is that it was never power at cost. It's been subsidized since the beginning of time.

It's probably good policy, because people, those on fixed incomes and those who have been accustomed to the strategy, need time, a transitional time, to adjust. But no, tomorrow morning the prices are going up, no question. I think they need accountability in pricing, they need transparency in prices and they need time to adjust, and we have to find a way to protect the most vulnerable.

Why do I say that? When I look at persons on fixed incomes—how are they going to manage this? It's a question you and I are going to have to ask as elected people. We're going to have to answer to those people. I'm concerned that there's nothing that I've heard from the Ministry of Energy that's going to give anything more than this paltry \$2-million fund, which amounts to

about two dollars per person below \$20,000 a year, to address this issue.

We all know that people need electricity to heat or cool their homes. They need electricity to cook their food and to manoeuvre with lights on. It's conceivable that as the price goes up, consumption will go down, with no discretion. In fact, it will be shutting people off, putting them in the dark so they won't be able to cook their food or have any quality of life.

Do those people have no voice? That's my question here. This debate on Bill 15 is more about democracy than it appears at first glance. It's about the lack of accountability. Their top ministerial official, Mr Sorbara, has been questioned for five days. Mr Runciman and our leader, Mr Eves, have tried to hold the government accountable. They've ducked it.

Today Ms Churley tried to introduce that the general government committee would actually try and have Mr Sorbara come and account before committee. It's clear that they aren't accountable. Bill 15 won't change one thing in that. It's more about embarrassing people. It's more about doing things that are politically motivated, which is contradictory to their whole election platform. That's why I'm discouraged—"It's time for change," and all this kind of stuff. I believe it is a time for change. It's too bad, but unless they change their ways, the people of Ontario are going to turn on them.

What happened at the general government committee today is that the Liberal-dominated committee would not listen to the opposition, would not listen to the point of view of the people of Ontario. They were whipped to a vote of 6 to 2 to protect Mr Sorbara and Mr McGuinty and the minions who are running it in those offices.

There's a whole litany that I could recount for the next hour if I were permitted. It's in that frustration—I have no real choice. I'd like to speak as long as possible, as long as I get the Minister of Energy to listen to the people of Ontario. In my view, I have no choice but to move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr O'Toole has moved adjournment of the House.

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1759 to 1829.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will stand and remain standing.

You may be seated.

All those opposed will stand and remain standing.

You may sit down.

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 3; the nays are 45.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1830.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Mercredi 31 mars 2004



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Honourable Alvin Curling

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 31 March 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 31 mars 2004

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

COMMITMENT TO THE FUTURE OF MEDICARE ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'ENGAGEMENT D'ASSURER L'AVENIR DE L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 23, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 8, An Act to establish the Ontario Health Quality Council, to enact new legislation concerning health service accessibility and repeal the Health Care Accessibility Act, to provide for accountability in the health service sector, and to amend the Health Insurance Act / *Projet de loi 8, Loi créant le Conseil ontarien de la qualité des services de santé, édictant une nouvelle loi relative à l'accessibilité aux services de santé et abrogeant la Loi sur l'accessibilité aux services de santé, prévoyant l'imputabilité du secteur des services de santé et modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): When the House last debated Bill 8, the member for Nickel Belt had the floor. She has five minutes remaining in her presentation.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It's a pleasure to get to the last point of my remarks. I said earlier that we oppose the bill for three reasons: (1) because it gives broad, sweeping, draconian powers to the Minister of Health to take over hospital boards and take away pay and compensation of hospital CEOs who are not employees of the Ministry of Health but of local hospital boards; (2) because the bill does absolutely nothing to stop the further privatization of health care services, which is one of the recommendations Romanow made because there was no evidence presented to him that the private sector could do things better, more efficiently or with better health outcomes; and (3) because the Ontario Health Quality Council won't be able to hold the minister and the government accountable despite the best efforts of the minister to try and tell the public that. Let me just focus on the council in the moments that I have remaining.

It goes without saying that if you want a council to hold the government accountable, then that council

should be able to make recommendations to the minister for changes in health legislation, to make recommendations to the minister for changes in health policy and to make recommendations to the Minister of Health with respect to health care funding. If those things happened, and if the minister actually had to follow up on those recommendations, then you could clearly say that a health quality council could make the government accountable, and could ensure that the health care system could be improved because those gaps that the council identified would be filled by its recommendations, and recommendations for funding.

Does this health quality council have that kind of power? No, absolutely not. The council has the opportunity to make reports to the people about access to health care services, health human resources, consumer and population health status, and health system outcomes. The ability of the council to make recommendations stops at the point where the council can only make recommendations to the minister and to the government about future areas of reporting; no opportunity for them to make recommendations on what they learned, no opportunity to make recommendations about health human resource planning, about dealing with public health funding or about dealing with access to publicly funded services—none at all. Their only role is to make recommendations about what else they can report upon.

We had a great bit of work done just recently. This is the interim report on SARS that was released December 2003. There are some very eminent individuals who sit on this as members: Dr David Walker, dean of health sciences, director of the school of medicine at Queen's University; Dr Donald Low, chief of microbiology, Mount Sinai; Dr Jack Kitts, president and chief executive officer of the Ottawa Hospital, and the list goes on.

These fine people made 53 recommendations in their interim report for changes to the Ontario health system so that the health system could respond to future outbreaks like SARS—53 recommendations, and we have heard nothing from the government of Ontario about what recommendations are going to be implemented, what kind of funding is going to be allocated to make these recommendations a reality.

Indeed the second recommendation, which says very clearly that the chief officer of health should be independent of the Legislature, is one that this minister has taken a contrary position on. The new chief medical officer is also an assistant deputy minister. She's not independent of the government, as was recommended in

this report, even recommended in the Liberal election platform. She's tied directly to the bureaucracy and to the minister, because now she is the ADM. Very good people did very good work, and this sits on the shelf.

1850

That's exactly what I think is going to happen with the work of the health quality council. There's no doubt in my mind that very good people will come forward and will want to serve. The fact of the matter is that, because they have no power to make recommendations, no power to make changes with respect to legislation or health policy, they will not be able to hold either the minister or the government accountable with respect to the direction of health care in Ontario. I am worried that their reports, like this one, are just going to sit on a shelf.

In conclusion, let me repeat: We, as New Democrats, are very much opposed to this bill. We are opposed because the bill gives sweeping, draconian powers to this government, worse than what we saw by the former government with Bill 26. We are opposed because the health quality council will in no way, shape or form be able to hold the government accountable with respect to the state of health care in the province. We are opposed because, despite the glowing words in the preamble, nothing in the content and detail of the bill stops further privatization of the health care system. In fact, the Liberal government goes down the same road as the Conservatives before, with the P3 hospitals, with the private MRI and CAT scan clinics and with competitive bidding in home care. If you wanted to make change, you would stop privatization now.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham): First of all, I want to say that we firmly believe public health care is the best kind of health care. That is why we further believe that publicly funded, universally accessible health care is the best kind of health care system, which Ontarians should be entitled to, and we are entrenching this in law through the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act.

I also want to say that there are tough provisions against two-tier medicine, including mandatory reporting of queue-jumping and extra billing.

The member from Nickel Belt talked about the health quality council. I want to point out that we will be creating an independent, objective body reporting to the public on the performance of the health care system. This is accountability. This council will encourage and promote an integrated, consumer-centred health care system. It will also make our health system more transparent and accountable.

One very important aspect of the council is that it will track the performance of our health system, because no matter what we put in place, there has to be something measurable, something we can monitor on an ongoing basis. This is exactly what the council will do for us. It will also help Ontarians to better understand and benefit from our health system. This is what we need, and that is why Bill 8 has put this mechanism in place, so that we

can monitor, improve and communicate to Ontarians on a regular basis.

I disagree that this council does not really have any obligation to the public, because through the minister, of course, it will report its monitoring and measurement process on a very effective basis and on a regular basis. I am proud and very vocal in supporting this bill.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise tonight to say a few words on Bill 8 and to comment on the speech by the member from Nickel Belt.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Was it a good speech?

Mr Dunlop: Yes, it was a good speech.

I also want to take a few seconds to compliment her on her presentation this afternoon to the Ontario Association of Optometrists. She did an excellent presentation on behalf of the New Democratic Party, commenting on the situations that the optometrists find themselves in. They haven't had an increase in 15 or 20 years.

Today it was really unfortunate—and I think the member from Nickel Belt will likely agree with me on this—that we never had anyone from the Liberal Party at the demonstration or the rally outside. I was there, Cam Jackson from the Conservative Party and a number of people from the New Democratic Party were there, but no one showed up from the Liberal Party—72 members and no one came. It is unacceptable that a party that is calling for democratic renewal actually doesn't have anyone attend something as important as the Ontario Association of Optometrists, which represents three million clients in the province. They're only asking for fair treatment.

For example, they asked for a deputation at the standing committee on finance and economic affairs on the pre-budget consultations. They weren't even allowed that. Some 1,200 optometrists are represented here in Ontario, and this government would not allow them the opportunity to speak at the pre-budget consultations, and no one from the Liberal Party showed up this afternoon. That's unfortunate. Thank you very much for this opportunity.

Mr Marchese: I want to thank the member from Nickel Belt, a friend and colleague—an incredible speech again. Imagine, she does this research on her own. We've got no researchers. We've got one or two people. Every cabinet minister has about 10 to 15 staff. The caucus has four or five million bucks to help them do their role, to break their promises as effectively as they can, four or five million bucks to help you understand why they've got to break their promises. We have a couple of staff people to help us out in doing the work that people like Shelley Martel are doing day in and day out. Great presentation.

I've got to tell you, I replaced Shelley one day in that committee. Not one deputant coming before us the day I was there said Bill 8 is a great bill—not one. Normally, when you present a bill, you usually find a couple of people saying this is good, not bad, really great. But not one person came in front of that committee and said,

"Marchese"—or somebody else; whoever was there—"this is a great bill." Something is wrong with the bill if you can't even find one person to say it's a good bill. Shelley, maybe you found a couple, I don't know. She couldn't find any. She was in the committee all the time.

Lawyer Michael Watts said this: "I have read a number of presentations made to the committee, including yesterday's made by the OHA. I do not intend to repeat what has already been highlighted ... even with the minister's proposed amendments, seriously undermines the province's hospital volunteer board structure. Instead, I want to focus on what I perceive to be two of the greatest dangers of part III of the bill as currently drafted, which are (1) the shift of control from voluntary boards to the minister, and (2) the resulting increased likelihood of arbitrary political interference in the governance and management of hospital operations...."

"With the shift of control, our health care system will become less accountable, not more accountable—"

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Your time is up.

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): It gives me great pleasure to comment on the speech of the member for Nickel Belt in regard to Bill 8. I guess I'm somewhat confused. I keep on referring to the fact I've only been here for 150-odd days. I thought we were here to debate what's important to Ontario, to debate legislation to govern Ontario better, regardless of party stripe, but it seems to me that today the parties opposite are more interested in adjourning the House, in adjourning debate. I think that's absurd. I think the people of Ontario need to know that. We're here to try to make a better province for the people of Ontario, yet those folks are more interested in hearing bells, even during the presentation of the awards downstairs. I think that's a disgrace. Enough of that.

A few comments in the minute or so I have left: When I campaigned for the first time in this new role, people were skeptical. What difference would I make once I got elected to try to control some of the bureaucratic process? One of them was with some of our local services, and one is hospitals. I kept on hearing that hospitals are top-heavy, that we're losing nurses, that only a small percentage of nurses are full-time. I kept hearing that over and over again, and here we are, being proactive, trying to bring in a bill—we're trying to make an agreement with hospitals, yet some folks don't realize that.

To my friend Rosario, who says that nobody spoke about it, I have three hospitals in my riding. Yes, one has some concerns and I'm working with them, but I have one other hospital from which I'm happy to report I have a letter fully endorsing Bill 8. They said it's about time we did it. That's from the CEO. I tell you, they can't seem to get their act together. So there are two sides.

I hope we pass this legislation. It's very important.

1900

The Acting Speaker: I'm pleased to recognize the member for Nickel Belt. You have two minutes to reply.

Ms Martel: Just on two of the comments that were made in the responses: first, that publicly funded health care is the best form of health care—I agree. I wish the Liberals did, because there is nothing in this bill to protect publicly funded health care.

Second, that we're going to entrench publicly funded health care in this bill—who are you trying to kid? The best example of the contradiction between that comment and what the bill actually has in it has to do with P3 hospitals. Here is what Dalton McGuinty said before the election about P3 hospitals: "We believe in public ownership and public financing (of health care). I will take these hospitals and bring them inside the public sector," Dalton McGuinty, *Ottawa Citizen*, Wednesday, May 28, 2003.

Are the P3 hospitals going to be publicly financed? No, they are not. There is no difference between the Conservative leases and the Liberal mortgages. These P3 hospitals are going to be financed by the private sector through a private sector consortium. That's going to cost the taxpayers more, because only government can borrow at the lowest rate. So we're going to pay more for the cost of borrowing, because it's going to be done through the private sector. Secondly, the private sector is not going to do this as a charity case. They're going to want a profit—15% or 20%. So we're going to pay more to build that hospital just to get profits to the consortium.

We should be building these hospitals in Brampton and Ottawa in the public sector, because that way we can ensure that money that should go into patient services will go to direct patient care and not into the profits of the private sector consortium.

Where is Dalton McGuinty? Why isn't he committed to the promise that he made before the election? Why has he broken yet another election promise? More importantly, why is the government going to pretend that this bill somehow protects public services when you're going ahead with P3 hospitals?

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I welcome this opportunity to discuss Bill 8, and I will share my time on this occasion with the member for London-Fanshawe.

I also notice and send my compliments and greetings across to the member from Cambridge for being the sole survivor of the official opposition. We welcome his participation in this debate as well.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: My friend should know, if he does not, that it is not permitted in this House to comment on the attendance or non-attendance of members in this House.

Mr Delaney: I said you were here. I said I send my compliments to the member from Cambridge. I repeat—

The Acting Speaker: Member for Mississauga West, take your seat. I would just caution you that it's inappropriate to mention the presence of other members. Continue your speech.

Mr Delaney: I was privileged to share in the hearings conducted by the justice and social policy committee,

chaired by my colleague the member from Oakville, whom I commend for his stewardship of the process of gaining input from Ontarians on this act on the future of medicare in Ontario.

Some 40% of the budget of the province of Ontario each year is brought to bear on the health of Ontarians. In the fiscal year 2003-04, now ending, we will have spent about \$28 billion on the health of Ontarians. This figure has been growing by about 10% each year. Bill 8 addresses an important issue to Ontarians: If Ontario's investment in health has been growing by about 10% annually, then why hasn't the quality of health care in Ontario been improving by about 10% each year? Bill 8 helps the people of Ontario get the value from health care that their tax dollars have been paying for.

I'd like to start my remarks by talking about accountability. Accountability has been twisted almost beyond recognition by some in this debate. So let us return to what aspects of the organization of health care institutions that accountability is designed to address.

Accountability agreements exist between the Ministry of Health and a health care provider. They establish one or more of the following: performance goals and objectives regarding roles and responsibilities, service quality, accessibility of services, shared and collective responsibilities for health care outcomes, value for money and consistency. They establish plans and frameworks for meeting these goals and objectives, and they establish requirements for reporting and the provision of information.

In plain terms, Bill 8's accountability provisions mean that if the people of Ontario turn over \$28 billion to hospitals and other organizations across Ontario, then the people of Ontario want to know how effectively their money is spent. Ontarians want to be sure that these organizations charged with spending taxpayers' money spend it in accordance with the priorities of Ontarians and with the needs of their communities.

These goals resonated well with the institutions that will be governed by accountability agreements. Many deputants spoke in favour of Bill 8's accountability provisions.

On February 26, Perry Barnhart, vice-chair of the West Haldimand General Hospital, told us: "The West Haldimand General Hospital supports the government's commitment to medicare and key aspects of Bill 8, including the adoption of five key principles of the Canada Health Act and the inclusion of accountability as a sixth principle."

On February 24, Anne Wright, chair of the Lakeridge Health board of trustees echoed this agreement on adding accountability as a sixth pillar: "Entrenching accountability is a central principle in Ontario's health care system by establishing accountability agreements that set out clearly established, negotiated and agreed-to performance measures."

On February 23, Tony Dagnone, chair of the Ontario Hospital Association, which represents 159 hospitals, employing 200,000 health care professionals and

working with 500,000 Ontario volunteers, was even more emphatic in his support of Bill 8. In his own words: "We are here today to tell you that we unequivocally support the government's goal in introducing the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act."

My own local hospital in Mississauga West, the Credit Valley Hospital, presented the committee with a thorough, dispassionate and thoughtful brief that supported the accountability provisions in Bill 8. There was and is broad agreement on the provisions of Bill 8 dealing with accountability.

Many of us who have come from the private sector are familiar with accountability agreements. We call them business plans, departmental plans and other names. It lets us, as managers, know when we have succeeded. It lets us know where we need to work harder. The essence of accountability agreements rests with reliable and consistent data, collected on a regular and systematic basis. Such data are known by many names in our everyday world: uptime and downtime, throughput and other names to those on the front line; performance metrics, parameters, and similar names to those Ontarians in a line management or staff role.

Bill 8's accountability agreements allow the Ministry of Health to ensure that health care providers collect on a regular and consistent basis data that allows Ontarians to see how effectively Ontario's health care resources—not just money, but also people and time—are used. Accountability agreements not only allow Ontarians to see that specific and consistent targets are set, but to measure in specific detail how those targets are met or how those targets are missed.

Of all the health care providers who came before the justice and social policy committee, not a single one sat before the committee and said, "Well, we're in the bottom half of the province in the way that we operate." Yet it stands to reason that of the hundreds of health care providers in Ontario, half of them are in the bottom half.

I asked one deputant during the hearings, "What measures does the board direct the staff to undertake on an ongoing basis to quantify the efficiency, accountability and value for money within the hospital so that you can measure your progress and identify areas of concern?" I was not able to get a specific and quantitative response from this deputant. I did get a laudable statement of the hospital's objectives and how proud they were of specific aspects of its operation, but nobody could tell me why and how they knew or thought that their hospital was doing well.

1910

I ask the hard-working entrepreneurs and business people in Ontario what would happen if, in their business, their plans were more heavily weighted in favour of values and self-praise than in measurable criteria: activity plans, pro forma budgets and other measures that help Ontario managers keep focused and on track.

Accountability agreements are based on facts, figures and priorities. They clarify both the Ministry of Health's and the hospital board's priorities and the shared

expectations and specific deliverables on both sides. How do we decide upon these criteria that health care providers will measure and the data they will collect?

Bill 8 establishes a health quality council that will report to Ontarians on the health care system's performance. This council's activities allow Ontarians to see how well their health care system is performing, to see how well their institutions actually work alongside what their specific objectives were. To deliver high-quality, accessible health care, we need to know just what quality consists of and how well actual accessibility compares to what is theoretically possible in terms of accessibility. That means the nugget of gold within Bill 8 is this Ontario Health Quality Council. As the council works with the ministry and our hospitals and other health care providers within Ontario to identify, gather, validate and process data, Ontario will be able to measure how effectively our money, our time and our people deliver health care.

The key to good management is consistency. Consistency means measuring the same set of parameters, key indicators or metrics year after year. Bill 8 gives the people of Ontario a set of management tools to oversee how \$28 billion is spent. Bill 8 is about bringing the professional oversight of \$28 billion and some 200,000 people into the 21st century.

Bill 8 strengthens voluntary governance in our hospitals and other health care institutions. With Bill 8, an organization's board of directors is much less likely to be dominated or influenced by a powerful executive or team, and in so doing become instead a board of directed.

The minister has said on many occasions, and it bears repeating, that labour unions are not subject to accountability agreements. Bill 8 will not open collective agreements in force. Nothing in Bill 8 reduces or affects the protection accorded to collective agreements by existing legislation.

Bill 8 preserves the principle that Ontarians will have access to essential health care services based on their needs, not on their ability to pay. I have provided to Ontario an overview of the value of accountability agreements and of the importance of collecting data that empower volunteer boards through the Ontario Health Quality Council.

It is now my pleasure to ask the member for London-Fanshawe to continue the government's statement on Bill 8. Thank you for this opportunity to speak to Ontario on behalf of Mississauga West this evening.

The Acting Speaker: I recognize the member for London-Fanshawe.

Mr Marchese: I recognize him too.

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): Thank you, Mr Marchese, for recognizing me.

It's always a pleasure to stand up in this House to speak, this time in support of Bill 8. I'm a great supporter of that bill, because it is another fulfillment and commitment of what our government is doing for this province. Bill 8 entrenches our commitment to medicare. It ensures

that our government and future governments protect the universal health care of this province.

I had the pleasure of travelling with the committee for almost a week to listen to many people talking about the bill and raising their concerns. I don't agree with what the member for Nickel Belt said about not many people agreeing with or saying positive things about that bill. As the honourable member for Mississauga West said, many stakeholders of the health care system were impressed by that bill and were happy, because for the first time ever in this province the government—the Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty—introduced a bill, and after first reading sent it to committee to travel across the province and listen to the people, take their input and try to make adjustments. This is all about accountability, transparency and democracy, to listen to the people who specialize in that field.

I wondered when my colleague for Simcoe, I believe, was talking about negativity of the bill. When they were in government for the last eight years, they never did anything to strengthen health care in this province. As a matter of fact, they destroyed it. After we spend about \$28 billion on health care, we have one million people in this province who have no family doctor to go to. At hospitals you have to wait hours, maybe a month or a year to be seen by a doctor. They're still talking about the health care issues in this province.

Bill 8 sends a message to the people of this province, and for the first time shares views with the people. First, this bill will put a stop to block fees, because block fees create a barrier between the people of this province and health care. I had a lot of constituents who came to my office to complain about block fees. So many doctors in the past regime used them, took advantage of sick people and forced them to sign an agreement. If they didn't pay the money, they weren't allowed to visit a doctor. This happened in many places across this province. This bill will put a stop to it or at least will monitor it to see if it's being used properly and not mismanaged.

Another thing that is very important: sharing accountability, that the government and the board speak to the CEOs to give them advice and watch or monitor them to see if they are doing the job correctly. This never happened in the past.

Another very important issue is that Bill 8 encourages the health council to establish reports about the needs of health care. The reports go to the government, and the government tackles the whole issue, trying to support and enhance it.

Another important thing is to assure people from private insurance or private companies that they cannot—paying money to have an advantage to see a doctor would be illegal under this bill.

Another very important element is that this bill will monitor and enforce the law and make health care accessible to every person who lives in the province. The report that we're talking about from the council will also help the government to make sure and monitor the work of the hospitals or health care providers in the province.

Another important element: Bill 8 would strengthen the quality of health care and create an independent council as an arms-length body reporting on the performance of the health care system in public places.

During my travelling with the committee, all I heard was negativity from both sides; the Conservative side and the NDP side were always trying to see where they could find a weakness, and find a person, maybe important people, to speak against that bill. But this is what happened: They tried to get people to protest against the bill without knowing the components of that bill.

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Mr Marchese: I can't believe it.

Mr Ramal: Yes, it's correct, my friend for—

Mr Marchese: Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Ramal: —Trinity-Spadina. Thank you for correcting me.

They were trying to recruit people to protest—

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Marchese: No, Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Ramal: Whatever. He knows where he is, I guess.

As a matter of fact, they were recruiting people to protest against that bill without knowing what the bill was talking about. They were trying to convince the union movement, the front-line workers, that this bill is against the workers. But as a matter of fact, it isn't against the workers. They got all the assurance, all the talk from the minister himself. He assured all the unions that it's not going to open any bargaining agreements. But our friends from the left side here insisted. They convinced—

Mr Marchese: Are you attacking unions, too?

Mr Ramal: Yes. You convinced the unions that this bill is against them.

Mr Marchese: I did that?

Mr Ramal: Not you, the other people in your party, and you know what I'm talking about. The minister went to the head of the union and told him it's not about opening bargaining agreements; it's about strengthening health care and supporting the people who work in health care, especially the front-line workers. Anyway, you guys build your strategy on being negative.

Another important component of the bill—

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): They're so negative in the opposition.

Mr Ramal: Always. They don't try to see the good stuff in that bill. I don't know what we can do.

Also, since that honourable member from Simcoe North is here, I want to talk about what he said and why he's against it. He also forgot that last year, the past government paid nurses for two million hours at triple the rate because we didn't have enough nurses in this province. Only 55% of our nurses are working full time. Bill 8 is working on recruiting the nursing body, because we believe nurses are the soul of health care in this province and are the people who provide the service for the whole country.

Hopefully you were here this morning when we heard the honourable member, Mr Smitherman, talking about already starting to hire nurses, almost 550—a small number toward the 8,000. That's what we are committed to do. That's why I'm going to support the bill. Hopefully both sides of the House will support it and realize it is very important to our province.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Dunlop: It's a pleasure to rise this evening to make a few comments on Bill 8. I'm very interested in the nurses that Minister Smitherman mentioned this morning. In fact, I think Minister Smitherman mentioned that he had hired somewhere between 400 and 500 nurses, and do you know what? Would I ever love to see a list of where those nurses were hired. Maybe you can provide that information to us, because I don't believe you and I don't believe him. I don't believe you've hired 500 nurses since you've come to power. But you can tell me I'm a liar tomorrow by providing me with that list of the 500 nurses who have been hired.

Mr Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to ask the member to withdraw that word "liar." It's unparliamentary.

Mr Dunlop: That's not a point of order, thank God.

The Acting Speaker: I recognize again the member for Simcoe North.

Mr Dunlop: All I'm really saying—and if I made a mistake using that word, I'm sorry—is, I just want to know where those 500 nurses have been hired, and I'd love to see that list. I'm sure, with this efficient Ministry of Health you've got and all the brilliant minds around the minister's office, you can provide that information to me early tomorrow afternoon. We look forward to where those 500 nurses are actually located. Maybe you can actually provide some of that information as well. I bet you can't, though. I bet you can't provide that. Tell me where the 500—

Interjections.

Mr Dunlop: Excuse me, just tell me where the 500 nurses have been hired in the province of Ontario since October 2 last year. Just tell me where they are. I just want to see a list of them. It should be very easy.

I'm looking forward to further debate on this bill. I want to hear the comments from my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka. He's got a lot of great information to provide you with. Thank you.

Mr Marchese: A couple of things. Yesterday we supported Bill 31; today we don't support Bill 8. It's as simple as that.

I am respectful of the fact that the members from London-Fanshawe and Mississauga West had to read the speeches prepared for them by the parliamentary assistant of the Minister of Health. I appreciate that you've got to do that. That's your job. But I am telling you that the day I was in committee and the days Shelley Martel was a member of that committee, not one person came in front of us and said, "This is a great bill." I don't know if the member from London-Fanshawe was there—was he?—

because he says was. He said he heard so many good things. It's not true.

Ladies and gentlemen watching this program, we're live. It's 7:25. What he said is simply not the case. No one said this is a great bill. The lawyer Michael Watts said that there is a "shift of control" from the boards to the minister and it will occur "if CEOs are subject to sections 21, 22, 26 and 27"—and they are. "The bill does not specifically require the minister to act in good faith"—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Jim didn't read it, so he doesn't know—"and the public interest in negotiating the accountability agreements and issuing the compliance directives, and the performance monitoring process for the determination of the issuance of consequences or incentives is not transparent and independent." That's what Michael Watts said. He's a lawyer and a good one.

Here is what the Ontario College of Family Physicians said, including Mrs Janet Kasperski, the executive director of the Ontario College of Family Physicians: "The preamble gives lip service to primary health care, but the bill is silent on how primary health care will be strengthened." She also says, "We read Bill 8 with a heavy heart. This bill is aimed at provider accountabilities but is silent on government and public accountabilities. It is hard to read the various sections in the act without feeling that once again providers are left with all the accountabilities and none of the supports needed to meet those accountabilities."

She further says—

The Acting Speaker: Your time is up. Further questions and comments?

Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): On March 31 at 7:27 pm, I'd like to say that Bill 8 is a bill that will hold our system of universal health care. For all those listening today, we are looking to the past—

Interjections.

Mr Fonseca: —and the good heart of the member from Trinity-Spadina, and here is where we come from: from a past of tax and spend and slash and burn, to knowing that those don't work. So we are transforming health care. Health care needs accountability, and Ontarians need this bill.

This bill is to make sure that the people of Ontario are getting the best service in their hospitals and in all health care. We want to make sure that those hospitals are accountable to those budgets, and it's working in partnership with the hospitals. As the minister has said, he has met with all the hospitals, he has met with all stakeholders, with an open door, to make sure that they negotiate, that they set accountability standards. This is what the people of Ontario have asked for. This is what we have brought forth in this Bill 8. We have gotten many calls applauding this bill.

The other parties are out there making false accusations about this bill, speculating about what is going to happen. What we know is that transformation of health

care has to happen in this province for it to be sustainable and accountable to the people of Ontario.

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I want to speak to Bill 8, and I must comment on the member from Mississauga East talking about transformation. Transformation is what we're seeing in the Liberal Party, because their platform didn't much resemble their throne speech, and their throne speech doesn't much resemble what they're doing now. Bill 8 is a manifestation of that transformation. What we have is a bunch of chameleons; they change with the surroundings. Whatever is going on, they're going to come up with something that they think is going to sell.

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Bill 8 is not going to do the job. Bill 8 is rendering hospital boards—the backbone of hospitals in rural Ontario—irrelevant. These people are so important to the hospitals in rural Ontario, and in all Ontario, as a matter of fact. Communities take ownership of those facilities because they care about them. And part of making those things work is having a hospital board that is part of the community, that is involved in the community and that the community feels it has input into what makes that hospital tick.

This bill, the minister's first attempt to bring a bill before this House, is a shame and a sham. It is going to take these people who have put so much into our health care system and our hospitals in this province and make them feel like their efforts are simply not appreciated, because they will be overridden by the minister. The CEO of those hospitals will not be answerable to the hospital board but to the minister, if he so chooses. That is democratic renewal? That is dictatorship, and that's what is going to happen in our hospitals. I fear for the community involvement of those boards, and I fear for our hospitals that depend so much on community support if those communities don't feel they have ownership of those facilities.

The Acting Speaker: One of the government members has two minutes to reply. I recognize the member for Mississauga West.

Mr Delaney: I thank the member for London-Fanshawe for his personal anecdotes on the challenges faced in our health care system and for his contribution from his own experience with constituents in the London area. I note that the member for London-Fanshawe has amplified points I had made earlier on the health quality council, and I thank him for the perspective he brought to it.

The member for Simcoe North talked about nurses. The member doubts the veracity of the Minister of Health and his commitment to build, or should I say rebuild, the foundation of nursing in Ontario. Surely the member opposite canvassed door-to-door during the last election. When I went door-to-door, I met hundreds of nurses who were moved to tears by their inability to find a full-time job. In response to the member's question, roughly half of Ontario's nurses now work part-time. Where will Ontario find its full-time nurses? We need look no further

than the nurses forced into part-time employment by eight years of being treated like Hula Hoop workers by the previous government. As the minister has said of the role of nurses in Ontario, nurses rule.

To the member for Trinity-Spadina, thank you very much for your comments. We have heard them before and no doubt we will hear them over and over again.

To my colleague from Mississauga East, he is one of those who has rolled up his sleeves and is responsible for the change that is working all across Ontario.

Thank you as well for your comments, to the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. I am very sure the member opposite shares our goal that Ontario's health care should be accessible to all. Perhaps the status quo was good for them, but it is not good for us, and that is why Ontarians chose change.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate on bill 8?

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It is my pleasure this evening to join in the debate on Bill 8, An Act to Establish the Ontario Health Quality Council, to enact new legislation concerning health service accessibility and repeal the Health Care Accessibility Act, to provide for accountability in the health service sector, and to amend the Health Insurance Act. That's what it says on the front of the bill.

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this proposed legislation. There is no other public issue as important to the people of Ontario as health care. Time after time and in poll after poll, Ontarians have made it clear that the one single thing their government must do well is provide and protect their health system. So it's no surprise this government is attempting to demonstrate action and competency on this file. What is surprising, quite frankly, is the weakness of their attempt. I would have hoped that after all the years in opposition, after the months of preparation since the last election, they could have come up with something much better than this.

I want to point out that I am far from alone in this opinion. It is not news when a member of the opposition is opposed to a government bill. But when well over 100 delegations express serious concern with the bill, you know the ship is well off course. It reminds me of an old European folk saying: "If one man calls you an ass, ignore him. If a hundred men call you an ass, buy a saddle." Well, more than 100 groups have pointed out good reasons why this bill should be saddled up and ridden back out of town. They've used terms like "draconian," "badly flawed" and "hastily drafted."

Groups from the Ontario Medical Association to the Ontario Association of Social Workers, say this bill will not accomplish its goals. Hospitals such as St Michael's Hospital in Toronto find the bill to be a slap in the face. Other organizations, such as the Capitol Health Alliance and the Speak Out for Kids network, go even further. They say this proposed legislation would actually undermine medicare in Ontario.

It's no wonder that this government has been forced to make numerous changes to the bill. As a result, some of the more blatant problems have been partially fixed. But

you cannot put patches on an Edsel and call it a Ferrari. This is still a deeply flawed piece of legislation.

What is interesting to me is determining the reasons why the legislation is so weak, so wrong-headed and so counter-productive to the government's stated goals. There are some people who would ascribe this to ordinary incompetence. Perhaps a fresh government with very little experience at governing or drafting legislation has simply failed to do its homework or has misunderstood the effects of the bill in putting it forward. Maybe we are seeing the effects of a novice minister and his staff rushing to get something before the House and into the newspapers.

Personally, I have a hard time believing this. The current minister was the Liberal Party's health critic for a long time. He has been a member of this House for many years. He has seen a lot of legislation come and go, and he should know as well as anyone what effects this bill will have.

Mind you, this is the party that during the last election campaign went around promising legislation to ensure public health care in Ontario, something that was already guaranteed under the Canada Health Act. A provincial law that says the same thing is pointless. However, the minister was still bragging about this concept in a press release when this legislation was introduced. Despite being told over and over again, the minister apparently still does not understand that the Canada Health Act guarantees universal public medicare. I suppose anything is possible.

The other explanation, which some people believe, is that the government has hidden motives for the changes it wants to make in health care. According to this theory, we are seeing a government determined to grant the Minister of Health unprecedented powers, unfair powers, nearly dictatorial powers. We've heard that a lot.

I understand that some of my honourable friends across the floor disagree with me, but I will be happy to point out some of the sections of this bill that do not fit that description. We're coming to that.

The theory of hidden motives says that this government wants to set the stage for controlling health care institutions, that it wants to break or override collective agreements, that it is ready and willing to throw out the concepts of public consultation or even public notice of changes to health care. I will point out the sections of the bill that do just that in a minute or two.

Clearly, these kinds of proposals run directly counter to the rhetoric we have been hearing from the minister, and even to the preamble to the bill itself. We are left with a puzzle in trying to explain the numerous and serious problems with Bill 8. Is it incompetence, inexperience or an unspoken agenda? Is this the gang that couldn't shoot straight or the gang that doesn't talk straight? I will leave it to others to draw that conclusion. I'm sure it is the judgment that the people of Ontario will be very interested in making in three and a half years; that is, if this government manages to keep its promise to hold scheduled elections every four years.

The users of our health care system and Ontario's health care providers will make that judgment. Certainly the professionals and stakeholders will be looking more carefully at the bill and will have a deeper understanding of how it threatens to weaken the system it claims to protect.

However, it is the consumers of health care who have the most to lose and who will be most sensitive to the real-life, front-line impact of this legislation. They are the ones who will hold this government accountable for its failure to protect health care and who will hold your feet to the fire between now and 2007.

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It may seem that many of the complaints about this legislation have to do with process or with administrative details that have only limited, internal effects. Perhaps that is why the government believes it can slide this legislation through. But the provisions of this bill will have profound effects on the actual everyday front-line provision of health care services to Ontario families. Why? Because it will put further pressure on health care providers and their organizations, driving more of them out of the province, damaging their morale and making it harder for hospitals and other organizations to manage their finances and affairs. The result will be fewer doctors and nurses at a time when the shortage of health care professionals is the most serious threat facing the health care system.

Today in question period I asked a question about the abandonment of the free tuition program for nurses who agreed to locate in underserved areas, particularly in rural and northern areas. I'm still waiting for an answer on that.

Ontario's health care providers and administrators will quite rightly see this legislation as an attempt by government to tighten its control over their professional lives and as an insult to their ability to govern their own organizations. They will quite rightly see this legislation as providing unprecedented powers to the Minister of Health. Worst of all, they will see the hypocrisy of this government in presenting legislation it claims will preserve public health care when its effects will be the opposite. Again, this is not merely my opinion; these are the concerns of health care professionals across the province.

I mentioned earlier that I would review some of the provisions of Bill 8 that lead to these conclusions. The contradictions and omissions start right in the preamble of the bill. It's amazing: You don't even have to wait to get into the regulations; the bafflegab starts right up front. The worst of it is the language about shared responsibility and common vision. These are great concepts, worthy of forming a basis for health care reform. Unfortunately these ideas occur only in the preamble. The substance of this bill is in fact the opposite of those values.

Shared responsibility implies a two-way street. The accountability in this bill travels only one way, from the bottom up. There are plenty of new demands and limits

on health care providers and institutions, but no new responsibility from the top down. Where is government's accountability for improving health care outcomes? Not in this legislation. How about government's obligation to provide proper support and funding for the provision of health care? Not here. Will government be accountable for making the best possible use of public resources in health care? Who knows? It's not in the bill. What happened to the independent health council this government promised in the speech from the throne? Again, it's not here.

Perhaps the honourable members opposite have already forgotten what they promised the people of Ontario in that speech just a few short months ago. Let me refresh their memories. The speech from the throne said:

"New legislation will be introduced to create a new health quality council. This independent council will report directly to Ontarians on how well their health care system is working—and how well their government is working to improve health care.

"Your new government understands it can only hold others to a higher standard if it subjects itself to the same standard."

That's gone out the window. Under this legislation, the council will not be independent, it will not report directly to Ontarians and it won't tell us how well this government is managing the health care file. What's left is an expensive piece of window dressing and an excuse for new, wide-ranging powers for the Minister of Health.

Just look at some of the stuff this government is trying to push through under the section of this legislation governing the new health council. According to this bill, if you are a member of the board or a senior staff member of a health care organization, you cannot be on the council. In other words, let's start by keeping the most experienced and knowledgeable people out of the picture—goodness knows, they might start asking awkward questions. Don't worry, because there is no danger of independent thought on this council; every single member will be appointed by cabinet. The government will also have the power to define what qualifies as a health care institution, so it can limit the pool of potential appointees.

Once the council is up and running, it will issue a report every year, not to the people of Ontario as the government promised, no, it will issue a report to the minister. The report will be limited to those areas that the minister dictates. If the minister wants to exclude some area for any reason, his word is final.

What will all this accomplish? Whatever the minister wants it to, of course. What will it cost? That's a good question. The council will have to give the minister a business plan each year, but the minister will not have to table it. Only he will know how the council is spending its money, only he will have power over its budget; so much for independence and government accountability.

The most interesting twists to this story are to be found in subsections 6.1(5) to 6.1(7), where the true

purpose of this council may be hiding. According to these parts of the bill, when the council makes its annual report, the minister can impose new health care regulations without notice or consultation. Effectively, the minister's council can provide him with the basis for any action he cares to take. In fact, these sections give the minister and the Premier the power to throw out public consultation, and even public notice, whenever they deem it necessary. Subsection 6.1(11) even protects them from legal liability.

Apparently this is what passes for accountability under this government. Apparently this limited, controlled, tamed and neutered council will be this government's method of determining so-called common vision. We're still in the preamble, and the hypocrisy is already hip-deep.

It is clear that this government is not interested in following through on its fine words about mutual responsibility. We put forward an amendment that would have cemented that mutual aspect in the bill. It was a simple addition: "Support negotiated accountability agreements between the government and health resource providers that enhance the accountability of both the government and health resource providers." This amendment to the preamble would help recognize that accountability needs to be mutual, that it is a shared responsibility and extends to everyone within the health system, not just the health care providers.

Not surprisingly, the motion was lost. Clearly, this government wants only to make the sounds of mutual accountability, open government and shared responsibility. It will talk the talk, but it will not walk the walk. I know Elizabeth Witmer, the health critic, made many amendments, after consultation, none of which were adopted by the government.

We run into the same kinds of problems elsewhere in the preamble. Numerous times there is fine language or at least fine sentiments that have no relation to anything actually in the bill. For example, the preamble recognizes that pharmacare for catastrophic drug costs and primary health care based upon assessed needs are important to the future of the health care system. Who can argue with that? Unfortunately, the preamble is the only time that pharmacare and assessment-based primary care are ever mentioned. Yet these issues are so important that this government put them right in the preamble and then left them out of the bill itself.

This is typical of the quality of thought and preparation behind this legislation. Is it any wonder that the minister has been swamped with deputations, letters, phone calls and e-mails, all pointing out what is missing and wrong with this legislation? I've barely scratched the surface so far, and I could go on all week.

I would like to take a moment to reflect on some of the local information I've received from constituents in my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. One of the health organizations wrote, commenting on the bill, to the committee clerk. I will read that:

"We support the government's commitment to medicare and other key aspects of the bill, including the establishment of the quality health council, the adoption of the five principles of the Canada Health Act and the inclusion of accountability as a sixth principle.

"We are concerned that the draft legislation lacks reciprocity between the minister ... and health care providers with respect to accountability, communication and consultations.

"The legislation allows unprecedented authority for the minister to undermine the role of the elected board of directors by intervening without consultation and without public interest to change board decisions ... or invoke directives.

"We are concerned that the current system of voluntary governance and the accountability relationship between the board and the chief executive officer will be detrimentally affected. We are concerned that these provisions would adversely affect the organization's ability to recruit and retain volunteers as well as qualified, experienced leaders."

It's obvious from this letter from a health care provider in my riding that they're quite concerned this legislation is going to undermine their ability to get volunteers to serve on a hospital board. This is very important, especially in the north, and especially where you have smaller communities, unique communities.

I think of my own riding. On Saturday last week, I was at a couple of birthday parties. Health care is a very important issue with most of our constituents. At this 80th birthday party I went to, the topic of health came up, and the husband of the woman I was speaking to had suffered a stroke.

In the town of Bracebridge, they've just successfully lobbied to get a CT scanner approved. That's very important for the town of Bracebridge. That lobbying comes in big part because you have local hospital boards that know the interests of their community and speak up for their community. With Bill 8, the value of those local boards would be lost. In fact, you may even have difficulty getting people to sit on boards.

I'll read some comments on the bill from another health care group in my riding:

"While a number of changes were made to the bill, we believe that the amendments have not yet corrected the most serious deficiencies in the bill. We believe further changes need to be made to sufficiently safeguard the critical role of community governance of hospitals.

"The central problem with Bill 8 is that it gives Queen's Park the power to impose anything it likes on any individual hospital. The government can bypass hospital boards, the people who know the most about the hospital and the services it provides to the community.

"We strongly recommend that the bill be returned to the standing committee for public hearings following second reading for further amendments. Ontario hospitals would welcome the opportunity to work on additional changes that will allow us to move forward together" to address some of these concerns.

You can see that the local hospital community has some real concerns with this bill.

I haven't finished speaking on this bill, but in protest of what happened this afternoon, the fact that the general government committee would not look into the Sorbara affair, I don't respond to Marilyn Churley's motion to look into the fiasco we have going on right now—

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): The scandal.

Mr Miller: —the scandal we have going on right now—and in protest of the democratic renewal we see in this Legislature, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Miller has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1953 to 2023.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Will all those in favour of the motion please rise and remain standing.

Those opposed to the motion will please rise now and remain standing.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 3; the nays are 34.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka has the floor.

Mr Miller: Today in the general government committee, there was a motion by Marilyn Churley to have the committee investigate the Sorbara affair. The government used their majority to shut down democracy. That's democratic renewal with this new government. In protest of this, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

Those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be another 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2024 to 2054.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 2; the nays are 37.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It's now time for questions and comments relating to the presentation by the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka.

Ms Martel: I just want to follow up on comments made by the member with respect to local hospital boards and the implications of the bill passing in its current form. We heard from many hospital boards that said that if the bill passed and there were still provisions in the bill which allowed for the minister to impose orders or compliance arrangements, they would resign. The fact of the matter is that the bill, as amended, still allows the minister unilaterally to impose orders and to impose

compliance directives, and further, to snatch back pay remuneration of CEOs, who are legitimately employees of the hospital board, not the minister and not the government.

It's very clear that the OHA doesn't believe there has been any significant change in this after the amendments, as much as the minister would like to tell people that. Here is what they said in a letter of March 17 that was copied to a number of members of the committee: "The central problem with Bill 8 is that it gives the provincial government the power to impose anything it likes on any individual hospital, bypassing hospital boards, the people who know most about the hospital and the services it provides to the community."

These are the concerns they continue to have:

"First, although a reference to negotiated accountability agreements has been included, the legislation still permits these agreements to be imposed after a period of 60 days without referral to a third party dispute resolution mechanism. Throughout our discussions with you ... we have made it clear that the due process provisions are insufficient and that the bill must expressly provide for referral to dispute resolution....

"Second, the bill gives the minister extensive powers to issue a broad range of compliance directives and orders against the board—again, without first referring the matter to third party dispute resolution or, at a minimum, obtaining approval from cabinet. Again, we have been very clear that this is not acceptable to our members.

"Third, we cannot endorse provisions which give the government authority to issue orders directly against hospital leaders, undermining the role of the board. We believe that sections 26.1 and 27 should be deleted in their entirety."

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): Bill 8 is a commitment of this government to the future of medicare in this province, to sustainable health care. This bill will help make health care more responsive, comprehensive and accountable.

I spent three days with the committee going across the province, in Ottawa, Windsor and Toronto. We're asking for change and we must ask for change.

The party opposite, when they were government, forced my hospital, the Montfort, the most efficient and best run hospital in Ottawa, to go to court to stay open. The Montfort won their court case and they stayed open. They do great knee replacements; I can tell you that. They will have no problem with accountability agreements. They run their hospital efficiently.

I'm pleased that Minister Smitherman and this government are going to change the focus of health care in this province. Prevention will become a big part of our program. It is already starting in our high schools. I'd like to report that 12 students at St Peter high school in my riding have already decreased by 5% the number of students smoking at St Peter. This is just the start of a five-year program. Hundreds of young people will not become addicted because of this great work of 12 of their

peers. A public health nurse from the city of Ottawa is looking after this program. It involves 40 schools this year and over 60 schools next year. That is the type of innovation and prevention this government is talking about and is enshrining in Bill 8.

Bill 8 means changes for hospitals, for hospital boards, for health providers and for this government. The intent of Bill 8 is to support board accountability, clarify expectations and ensure that CEOs are accountable to the board. We believe in accountability. We believe in prevention. This government, this Minister of Health, George Smitherman, and this bill will change health care in Ontario for the better.

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Mr Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise tonight to make a few comments on the long speech by my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka, Mr Norm Miller. I have to tell you, someone has to defend rural Ontario. We know that Dalton McGuinty—I think he has a Minister of Agriculture who is from a city. Someone has to defend rural Ontario, and that's what Mr Miller's job is here tonight.

I'm so pleased to see that the Minister of Transportation is here this evening, because we're pleading with you, Minister, on Highway 69 and Highway 11 through Simcoe county and Muskoka-Parry Sound. This is a very serious issue to the economic development of the north and of central and rural Ontario. We cannot have toll routes. We do need the highway expanded. We need to know that that additional 100 kilometres through to Parry Sound will be complete, and we need to know that that additional 40 kilometres on Highway 11 through to North Bay will be complete. It's very important to the economic development of the north.

I'm sorry to say this, but I don't think Dalton McGuinty really cares about rural Ontario. I know a lot of members here are from the GTA and particularly from the city of Toronto itself, but someone has to defend this huge geography we have in the province of Ontario. We simply don't have a voice here. Thank God we've got a guy like Norm Miller, from Parry Sound-Muskoka, who cares about the citizens of rural Ontario. He cares about northern Ontario and he cares about Muskoka-Parry Sound.

I plead with you and I plead with the Minister of Transportation to defend the hospitals in the province of Ontario, to defend the hospital boards and to defend the highways, particularly Highway 11 and Highway 69.

Mr Mauro: It's my pleasure to rise tonight and add my comments as well on Bill 8. I, as have I'm sure many others in this Legislature, have met with some of the stakeholders involved in this issue, and I can tell you that my understanding from them is that much of what is in this bill is acknowledged by many of these groups in the health care sector and the general public as well as being absolutely necessary.

I can understand why some of the members of the official opposition do not seem to place too much importance on the issue of accountability, the central tenet of this bill. I suppose that if, when you were in government,

you weren't concerned about appropriately funding hospitals, you wouldn't be concerned if they ran deficits. Well, we as a government are concerned—that from a former government that tried to sell itself as a fiscally responsible alternative to the voting public.

We are concerned because we were left to clean up the mess to the tune of approximately \$385 million. I'm sure some members of the opposition will remember that announcement. That was the total deficit left for us to clean up in the hospitals. We could hire a lot of nurses with \$385 million.

Still, the opposition speaks out against fiscal responsibility. We all know that the percentage of the total provincial budget continues to rise, approaching 40% of a \$70-billion to \$75-billion budget on health care. We all know, or we should know, that change is required in health care if we are to maintain the viability of the system. If we are truly concerned about health care in all its forms, we should understand that budget excesses in the hospital sector affect our ability to deliver health care to other sectors of the system.

Who of us hasn't heard of the concerns of the community care access centres and long-term-care facilities, mental health services that haven't seen fee increases in a long time, staffing issues? The challenges in the health care sector are well documented. I will enjoy being able to tell members of the public how the members of the two opposition parties voted against financial accountability for hospitals, benchmarking and service measures that will be achieved by mutually arrived at accountability agreements.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka has two minutes to reply.

Mr Miller: Thank you to the members for Nickel Belt, Ottawa-Orléans, Simcoe North and Thunder Bay-Atikokan for their comments.

The member for Nickel Belt made some good points to do with local hospital boards and the affect that Bill 8 would have on those. In my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka I have three hospitals and three hospital boards that I meet with on a regular basis. These are great people. They're outstanding citizens of the local communities—volunteers—and they're looking out for the best interests of their respective communities of Bracebridge, Parry Sound and Huntsville.

We have three great hospitals and three great hospital boards. I'm concerned that Bill 8 is going to effectively sideline them and take away the local input that these boards have had, which has been so important in such things as our successful bid for a new CT scanner locally, in the towns of Bracebridge and Huntsville. There's never a day that goes by when there's not another concern that they're raising and fighting for, so I think it's very important that we maintain the important role of hospital boards. Bill 8 will have the effect of weakening the role that hospital boards play. It will have the effect of really making them just advisory boards without any real power. The minister will have a direct relationship with the CEO of the hospital, and the hospital boards will lose their effectiveness.

Thank you to the member for Simcoe North for saying that I'm a defender of rural Ontario. Certainly in the current government, as was mentioned in the article today by Eric Dowd in the Thunder Bay Chronicle—he outlines how the balance in the minister's office is very much biased towards Toronto and the cities of Ontario. I think someone has to stand up for rural Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate on Bill 8?

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I'm pleased to speak tonight in support of Bill 8. I will be sharing my time with my colleague for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh.

Bill 8 is our Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, our commitment to the future of universally accessible public medicare. We will be banning two-tier health care. We will be creating the Ontario Health Quality Council and we will be establishing accountability agreements with hospitals throughout the province. But before I talk about those details, I'd like to talk a bit about the process that this bill has gone through. After its first reading, it was referred to the committee on justice and social policy. That committee traveled the province, listening to the concerns of the people of Ontario, listening to positive suggestions for how we could improve the bill. We considered how we could address those concerns.

There has been a tremendous consultation process with the people of Ontario. One of the concerns that was raised in Guelph was whether or not the hospitals in my riding could continue to have what are called hospitalists. In the Guelph area, because of the tremendous workload they're carrying and the tremendous shortage of doctors, family practitioners have, in fact, withdrawn from hospital privileges. So the people who practise family medicine, the people who actually play the role of the family doctor inside the hospital when somebody is admitted to the hospital, are staff doctors called hospitalists. That's a somewhat unusual arrangement. In the original language of the bill, that wasn't actually covered, but it was raised as a concern to our Minister of Health and to the committee, and we listened. I'm very pleased that in the amendments that have been made to this bill, we have addressed that concern and have solved the problem of the concerns of my local community around hospitalists. As you go down the list, there is issue after issue that was in fact addressed because we took the time to listen to the people of Ontario, to listen to their positive suggestions and to bring back an improved bill. I'm very proud of that process.

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Back in the summer, or over the last year, knocking on doors and listening to the concerns of my constituents, one of the things that came up over and over again was the concern my constituents had that the previous government, the PC government, was going to move toward two-tier health care that was going to allow queue-jumping in our hospitals. I must say that my constituents had some reason for concern, because the former premier, Mr Eves, did in fact indicate at various times that he supported queue-jumping.

The National Post, a rather Conservative-friendly paper, reported on January 21, 2002: "Mr Eves said people should be able to buy their way to the front of the health care line." The National Post said on January 10, 2002: "He told the Barrie crowd it's a shame you can buy an MRI scan at a moment's notice for your dog, but not for your mother. And why not? Because 'we have a thing called the Canada Health Act' that forbids paying one's way to the front of a queue." Apparently, Mr Eves thought this was a bad thing.

Our government thinks it's a good thing to ban buying your way to the front of the queue, to ban two-tier health care where those who can afford to pay more can get quicker service. That's exactly what we're banning in Bill 8. That will no longer be allowed to happen in the province of Ontario. When you go to a hospital in Ontario after this bill comes into force, you will not be able to pay your way to the front of the queue. Whether or not you can access health care will not depend on the size of the wad of bills in your wallet. Every citizen of Ontario will have equal access to health care in Ontario, and we think that is an extremely important principle.

When Mr Romanow tabled his report on health care, he talked about the fact that the Canada Health Act is missing an important principle, and that is the principle of accountability. We're going to bring that principle into the health act. It's interesting that while the committee on justice and social policy was doing its hearings, the standing committee on public accounts was doing hearings examining the Provincial Auditor's report. As we looked at the Provincial Auditor's report, we found instance after instance where there was a lack of accountability, where in fact money had been transferred to a transfer agency, where money had been laid out in a contract, with no accountability controls attached to that money. We heard about situations where buildings were contracted without accountability. We heard about research. We heard about situation after situation where money was transferred out of the province of Ontario to a contractor or to an agency and there were no accountability standards set up for what the province of Ontario expected to receive in return for that.

We are not going to allow that situation to continue, because the largest part of the budget of the province of Ontario is spent on health care, and we think it is highly appropriate that we have accountability expectations for the hospitals throughout the province. That is why we are going to bring in accountability agreements with hospitals. Will local boards continue to play a huge role in the management of their hospitals? Of course they're going to continue to manage their hospitals, but it will be within a framework of knowing the expectations of the province for the money they are receiving from the province. I think that's a good thing.

The second way we are going to build accountability is by creating the Ontario Health Quality Council, an independent body which will be examining quality indicators for health care and which will be reporting to the citizens of Ontario on the state of our health care services.

Once again, the citizens of Ontario have cause for concern, because what do we find with the situation we've been left with by the Conservative government? We find that in Ontario we have fewer nurses per capita than any other province in Canada. We are ninth out of 10 in the number of family doctors per capita. From 1995 to today, there's an increase in the number of underserved communities from 60 to 122. The previous government allowed the number of underserved communities in this province to double. That's got to stop. We are eighth out of 10 provinces on per capita spending on health care. There's been no increase in base funding for community mental health services. Believe me, in my community we have a tremendous number of people with mental health needs who are just not receiving services. That is a problem.

What we are going to do is set up the Ontario Health Quality Council to report to the people of Ontario. Unlike the previous government, we're not going to try to hide data on waiting lines. We're not going to try to hide data on what's going on in our hospitals and our long-term-care facilities. We are going to report to the public. We are sure that as we move through our mandate, the reports will show that with Bill 8 we are improving the quality of health care for the citizens in Ontario. That's what this bill is all about, and that's why I am pleased to support it.

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): It is a pleasure for me to rise this evening to participate in this debate on Bill 8, the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act. I would like to say at the outset, and this is to those watching on television and those who may be able to read Hansard tomorrow, that, yes, I did prepare these remarks myself. I certainly hope the member from Trinity-Spadina understands that.

Interjection.

Mr Brownell: Right, but he might be watching.

As well, I must say that it is a pleasure for me to express these words tonight, for I travelled this province as the co-chair of the justice and social policy committee to hear depositions on the bill. As a new member to this House, I was pleased to learn that this bill, unlike many other bills put before this House in the past, was receiving scrutiny from stakeholders through these depositions after first reading. Although we did not set a precedent in this regard, we did decide at the outset to put the bill to early public scrutiny. I'm proud of this, and I'm proud of the many stakeholders who attended these hearings in communities throughout Ontario. We listened and, unlike what we have heard from the members opposite, we have used ideas and positions from these stakeholders in our amendments to the bill.

As I travelled the province with Bill 8, I continued to hear time and again from the member from Oak Ridges, who was part of the travelling group, comments that Bill 8 was draconian and the most regressive piece of legislation brought before the Legislature. In fact, he even proposed a motion during the hearing process to immediately withdraw Bill 8. Well, that didn't happen and

Bill 8 did go up to scrutiny in Sudbury, Ottawa, Windsor, Niagara Falls and here at Queen's Park.

I'm proud to say that it wasn't regressive legislation and it certainly wasn't draconian. I'm proud of the committee's work with this legislation. Yes, health care will be a destination on the map that the member of Oak Ridges commented about on March 22 when he said, "I'm hopeful that they will at least be able to find one destination on that road map."

These remarks may have been said in a throne speech debate, when the member referred to our government's destinations and where we have travelled to date. But I am proud that we have travelled to date with this bill, that I have travelled around Ontario, and I join the health minister in saying that Bill 8 will give the best to health care in Ontario. I stand with him as we work with the stakeholders in this province. We are not here to fight with them. We are not here to set up roadblocks for the delivery of the best health care. We are here to make public health care the best possible health care and to make sure that health care delivery breaks down the silos that have often have caused systems not to be cost-effective. Those silos have to come down.

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The health minister has been consistent and determined in his commitments to delivering the best in health care. I know I stand with the other members of the Liberal government in marching shoulder to shoulder with him as he delivers.

Health care in Ontario will not be a one-way street, forcefully imposed and dictated by a health minister and bureaucrats. Our commitment to the future of medicare is built upon negotiations with those who provide the services and making health care work by making it more accountable to the taxpayers of Ontario.

My colleagues and I listened to countless deputations around this province, providing public scrutiny for this bill. Before going out on the road with it, we knew it was not perfect. The health minister knew it was not perfect. For example, on the first day of deputations on February 16, the health minister made it perfectly clear: "We acknowledge the need to improve some areas of the bill to better achieve the intent of the legislation: to strengthen medicare in this province. It's clear we didn't get the tone of the bill right in some areas." Yes, we scrutinized our own piece of legislation, even before delivering it to the public. We wanted to get it right.

In listening to public health care providers across the province, we have developed legislation that is strongly committed to what is best in the future. We have provided legislation which remains true to the government's original intent: to preserve medicare in Ontario and to build on what Roy Romanow asked us to build upon. As the Ontario government, we believe that publicly funded, universally accessible health care is the best health care for Ontarians. By entrenching it law, we are showing that Bill 8 is a most important step in strengthening Ontario's health care delivery system and restoring this confidence to Ontarians.

The minister has said, my government has said and I have said that the provision of health care services in Ontario must be built on need, not on the ability to pay, and that tough measures must be implemented banning two-tier medicine, with queue-jumping and extra billing being things of the past. As well, we will see what Ontarians want to see: accountability in health care.

While travelling this province and listening to the deputations, we have heard many words of endorsement of the preamble, the motherhood issues surrounding the intent of the bill. The preamble was clear and precise, and it clearly indicated that the bill was the commitment to the future of medicare. Yes, I say "future."

Many times we heard the comments, especially from the third party, that the preamble excluded home care and pharmacare, that there was nothing in the bill. Members of this House, as the Minister of Health said today in reply to a member's question, there is much more building to be done in health care as we deliver the best possible health care across the spectrum. The bill indicated "future," and as we work with our federal counterparts in building a seamless system without the burdensome silos that presently exist, the future spelled out in the preamble will be the guiding light.

I am delighted to see that we will have improvements to the preamble by referring to the importance of community, the public interest, and by indicating that the proposed Ontario Health Quality Council will be the vehicle to help enhance government accountability.

In referring to the health quality council, let me say that its creation will help to ensure that Ontarians' tax dollars are spent wisely. This independent, objective council will report to the public on performance of the health care system, making sure that the system is more transparent and accountable—two important words. I am happy to say that we have amended the legislation to bring clarity to the membership on this council, making sure that the council is clearly focused on community-driven participation from individuals, health care professionals and consumers, thus avoiding stakeholder obbying.

We have made improvements, too, in the health services accessibility part of the bill. These amendments have been brought about by the comments made at the deputations. We know that the proposed changes regarding accessibility will give to those requiring health care services and those providing the service whistle-blower

protection should they report on queue-jumping and extra billing. It will ensure that people are charged for uninsured services, such as block fees, in a voluntary and informed manner.

Just a couple of examples of what the bill will do: We have amended and improved the bill by addressing physician payment issues, due process concerns, privacy of personal health information and the great concern we heard about the penalty provision for non-compliance.

In this House on this date, the Minister of Health made it crystal clear that the accountability part of the bill will be a negotiated process between the government and those who deliver. Roy Romanow would be proud of our determination to enshrine accountability in Bill 8 and our desire for the best in the future of Ontario's medicare.

I hope the member for Kitchener-Waterloo got the message clearly in this House today when the minister commented about negotiated—negotiated—agreements. I say to her—and this again can be read in Hansard—that we are not providing Bill 8 as a mechanism to fight the boards of our hospitals, long-term-care facilities, community care access centres and other independent health facilities in the province. We are there to work with them, to make sure that performance measures are clearly outlined and that a transparent process will be in place to meet the needs of patients and the public.

These new negotiated accountability agreements between the above-mentioned groups and the government will result in a common, clear and improved understanding of what is required in this province for example, more full-time nurses and shorter wait times.

As I toured this province, I learned much about health care services and delivery. The minister was down in my riding about two weeks ago, and he learned about what was needed in my riding. We talked about accountability. We talked about that cheque, which I continue to allude to, that was in the back pocket of the previous health minister but was never delivered. We talked about accountability. This government, which is delivering Bill 8, will have a bill that will be there, accountable to and open to the taxpayers of our province for the health care we so require.

The Acting Speaker: I want to thank the members of the House for their participation on Bill 8 tonight. It being close to 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10 am.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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Thursday 1 April 2004

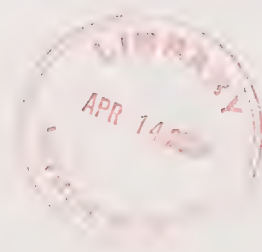
Jeudi 1^{er} avril 2004

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Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 1 April 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 1^{er} avril 2004

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): I want to advise the members today, particularly those who have bills to present, that you will be expected to speak for an hour and then there will be debate for the rest of the day.

Oh, excuse me; it's April 1. I'm sorry. Orders of the day.

EMERGENCY SERVICE PROVIDER'S INSURANCE PROTECTION ACT (INSURANCE AMENDMENT), 2004 LOI DE 2004 SUR LA PROTECTION DES FOURNISSEURS DE SERVICES D'URGENCE (MODIFICATION DE LA LOI SUR LES ASSURANCES)

Mr Wilkinson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Insurance Act to protect emergency service providers from rate increases to their personal contracts of automobile insurance / Projet de loi 40, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les assurances visant à protéger les fournisseurs de services d'urgence contre l'augmentation des taux dans leurs contrats d'assurance-automobile personnels.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr Wilkinson has moved ballot item number 7, second reading of Bill 40. Mr Wilkinson.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): Of course, Mr Speaker, you know me. I'm always good for an hour.

I wish to begin by recounting a true story, colleagues. It was a beautiful late summer day last year and I was spending an enjoyable afternoon with my two sons, Liam, age 10, and Breen, age 8. We were in the playground at Upper Queen's Park near the Stratford Festival. We had walked the 10 or so blocks from our family home. I was on the swings with my boy Breen, and Liam was about 20 yards away swinging on a set of undulating monkey bars about six feet high. I didn't see what happened to Liam; instead, I heard him cry out. It wasn't the normal call of a playful son to his father; rather, it was a cry of fear. I'll never forget that cry, "Daddy!" I instantly knew from the tone of his voice that something

was wrong, for a parent instinctively knows his own. My head snapped around and I saw my son lying underneath those monkey bars. He actually cried out my name twice more, each time with less strength, and then, silence.

Of course, I rushed to his side. He was lying face up, pain across his face and fear in his eyes as he gasped for breath. I assumed he had fallen and knocked the wind out of himself. I knelt beside him and reassured him that he would be all right and waited for his wind to come back, but it did not. Rather, he breathed in an eerie way, short little gasps. His face still contorted in pain, I asked where it hurt. I leaned my ear to his lips and heard something that chilled me. He said, "My back. My back. It hurts." Then I saw something that shook me to the core. As I leaned back and looked down at my son, I saw his lips, and they had a bluish tinge to them.

Mr Speaker, I'm not proud of what happened next, but I want to share with you my reaction. Frankly, sir, I froze. I'm sure it was only seconds, but those next few seconds became like an eternity. The world slowed down and I felt a fear well up inside of me that was terrible. I remember looking around at the other parents and children playing nearby. Since I was with my son and he was not crying, the other parents assumed I had the situation well in hand. I wanted to yell out, "Help!" but I could not. I was frozen by the fear that my son was dying right before me, his blue lips etched in my mind. I was frozen simply because I was a man who was unaccustomed to being helpless.

I looked at my other son, he too visibly upset that his brother was hurt. I did not want to reveal to him that our orderly little world was now completely upside down.

The good Lord was looking down on my sons and me that day. A young lady, a nursing student from Conestoga College, a good Samaritan, came over and asked if everything was all right. She agreed to stay with Liam and Breen while I called 911. I ran another 20 yards over to a nearby pay phone. I remember frantically searching for a quarter to call 911. Of course, you do not need a quarter to call 911, but I was that rattled. I dialled 911 and they picked up almost instantly: "Fire, ambulance, police?" I said, "Ambulance." I then described the situation. I said that my son's lips had turned blue, and I pleaded with them to come quickly. I described where I was, and they said I was to stay on the line while an ambulance was dispatched.

I tell this story for one simple reason. I knew that help was on the way, but I also knew that one thought, and only one thought, possessed my mind. It was my prayer that the ambulance would come quickly. I begged God

that absolutely nothing would impede that ambulance, that cars would get out of the way, that nothing bad like an accident would befall that ambulance.

Stratford is not a big city. Within seconds, I could hear the distant wail of sirens. In our community, when a call is received that someone is having trouble breathing, not only is an ambulance dispatched, but a fire truck as well. Within minutes, the fire truck wended its way among the winding roads of Upper Queen's Park, followed shortly thereafter by the ambulance.

Fortunately for my family, this true tale has a happy ending. The firefighters and paramedics quickly administered oxygen to my still-gasping son and his colour almost instantly improved. They immobilized Liam, still clearly in pain, by strapping him down to a backboard, and lifted him into the ambulance. A quick trip to the wonderful emergency department at Stratford General Hospital revealed that while severely bruised, he did not suffer any permanent damage.

When a citizen calls 911 because a person is injured or their house is on fire or they are being victimized by a criminal, they all want the same thing I did. They want those most brave of public servants, the firefighters, paramedics and police officers, to come right away, without delay. They want nothing to slow them down, just as I prayed that late summer day for my son.

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Insurance Act to protect emergency service providers from rate increases to their personal contracts of automobile insurance, is the result of a meeting I had here at Queen's Park last December with Stratford firefighters Jim Byatt and Randy Petrie. They shared with me that some of their members across the province, while on duty and responding to an emergency with their lights flashing and their sirens wailing, had unfortunately been in automobile accidents. Incredibly, when these professionals had renewed their private automobile insurance, they had seen their personal premiums increase as a result of accidents they had while on duty. Later that week, I heard a similar story from the Ontario Paramedic Association. I offered to look into this disturbing matter.

1010

As a member of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, I had an opportunity to meet with Bryan Davies, the superintendent of the Financial Services Commission of Ontario. I recounted to him the problem I had heard of. His initial reaction was that this did not happen, and he quickly added that if it did happen, it should not be happening. Mr Davies was kind enough to provide me with a brief confirming that it is not in the public interest for emergency service providers to have their public duties result in an increase in their private insurance. He advised that if I brought such cases to his attention, he would intervene.

Though I was pleased with the response from our provincial regulator, nonetheless, we here are legislators. To me, it is completely unacceptable that firefighters, paramedics and police officers should have to know that they need to contact their MPP, who in turn is supposed

to know that he or she should contact the superintendent of the Financial Services Commission of Ontario and that this will lead to an eventual reduction and repayment of premiums charged that should never have been charged in the first place.

We here in this place have the ability to ensure that this practice does not happen. That is the intent of my bill.

I'm pleased to acknowledge that in the gallery we have supportive representatives from the beneficiaries of this proposed bill: from the Police Association of Ontario, Bruce Miller; from the Ontario Paramedic Association, Rick Trombley; and from the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, Ed Kennedy and Hugh Doherty. They are joined by Wally Thomasik, from the Ontario Police Association. I can assure this House that they are in support of the bill.

Moreover, I believe that this bill has the support of members from all three parties. It is a testament to the overwhelming support that firefighters, police officers and paramedics have from members of this Legislature that we join this morning in common cause to debate this bill.

It is my hope that at noon, the second reading of this bill will receive the unanimous support of this assembly and be referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs. At that stage, it is my hope that the bill will be subjected to public hearings so that those affected can share with us any amendments that they feel could strengthen the bill. Moreover, I pledge today, as the sponsor of the bill, that I will work with all three parties to ensure that any amendments also receive their complete support.

I trust that my colleagues and I can rise above partisanship in regard to this important issue. Why? Because when any of us, God forbid, calls 911, we all want but one thing: that our bravest of public servants come just as quickly and safely as possible. That can be our common legacy today.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: The bells ring before we enter the session for private members, at the beginning of the day and for the evening session. My office is in room 434. I cannot hear the bells. The bells are not working down the corridor where all our offices are because of the construction going on there. I think they may have disconnected whatever linkage there is with respect to the bell. I would appreciate it if you could look into that, so that we on the fourth floor have the same service that every other member in the House has.

The Deputy Speaker: We'll certainly have the Sergeant look at that.

Debate?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's a pleasure to rise this morning. A few of our caucus members here would like to make a few comments on this particular bill. To begin with, right up front, I'll tell Mr Wilkinson that we'll be very supportive of this bill. These are the types of things when we do deserve to have a free vote in

the House and people can support the whole process of democratic renewal, but we can also support things that are—

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): All our votes are free.

Mr Dunlop: Yes, I understand you have free votes. We saw that yesterday in general government.

Quite frankly, this is a good piece of legislation. It helps our emergency service workers. I'm pleased as well to see so many of the folks here today from the different organizations that I know support this as well. I had a chance to talk to Bruce Miller and to Wally the other night at the reception downstairs and they indicated they would be here today supporting this. I think it's important, and we thank them for being here.

It's amazing in this 911 scenario, the emergency program we have here in the province of Ontario—in fact it's right across the continent—how it's evolved to that. I think back to when I was a kid and what it used to be to get an ambulance or a fire truck and how we as a society have progressed in that area. All our local municipalities now have fantastic fire equipment. The response time is very quick. My office in Orillia is near the fire hall, and I cannot believe how many times a day that truck is dispatched to the different areas within the city. You can sit there throughout the day and probably, in a city the size of Orillia, with 30,000 people, you can count on those trucks going out 35 or 40 times a day, and that's just during the working part of the day, the 8-to-5 times.

It's important that people recognize not only how important the bill is but the fact of how many of our emergency service workers are dispatched on a continual basis. People would think there are not a lot of fires or accidents, but the fact is that every time someone dials 911, a number of individuals are dispatched to the site. In many cases, there are happy endings, as was the case with Mr Wilkinson's son. That was a nice story to hear.

As the critic for corrections, I have a lot of concerns with some of the things Dalton McGuinty is doing, some of his election promises. We won't deal with that today. But certainly on this bill, I hope all three parties will support it. I'm sure the NDP will support it and I hope your own caucus members will, and you can count on our government—we still think we're the government. We are the opposition. The Conservative Party of Ontario will support it as well.

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I'm very pleased to speak to this bill this morning. We need to recognize that our firefighters, our paramedics and our police are the people responsible for community safety. They're the people who keep our families safe, who keep our businesses safe, who keep our homes safe, and it's very important that they be allowed to do their work without any other extraneous concerns.

Certainly if my parents had a health problem, I would want the paramedics there quickly. If I had a fire at my house, I would want the firefighters there quickly. If there is a problem at my constituency office with somebody who is mentally unstable and threatening my

staff, I want the police there quickly. In all these cases, we have people who, to keep our community safe, have to respond quickly.

Now, if they should, unfortunately, while responding quickly, get into an accident, of course the insurance costs of that accident are covered by the employer: by the police force, by the ambulance service, by the fire department. So this isn't an issue about, are the insurance costs covered? The issue is, what happens to those people who keep our communities safe? What happens to their individual insurance? Unfortunately, we have found that the practice among a number of insurance companies has become that if one of those emergency response workers gets into an accident in the course of responding to an emergency, when they report this to their personal insurance company, their personal insurance rates are being driven up. I want to assure you that this is not simply a hypothetical problem. This is a real problem.

1020

As we talk to firefighters, we find that in a number of cases where firefighters have been involved in an accident on the way to an emergency their personal insurance has gone up. When we talk to paramedics who were responding to a health emergency, we find that what has happened is that their personal insurance has been driven up. Again, when we talk to police services about what happens when their members get into an accident, unfortunately in a number of instances their personal insurance has been driven up. In fact, we talked to one police service where the problem has gotten so serious in terms of their members' individual personal auto insurance going up that the police union has actually started to go out and get personal auto insurance for their members in an effort to strike a deal with one company that agrees it's not going to carry out this practice. But this seems to have become a more and more widespread practice.

It doesn't appear that it's the intent of the regulator that this should be happening, but it doesn't seem to be specifically forbidden. This is what this legislation addresses. This legislation addresses the very specific instance in which an emergency worker, while responding to an emergency call in the line of duty, protecting us and protecting our families and protecting our communities, unfortunately gets into an accident. What happens is that they're being charged on their personal insurance. We don't believe that should happen. This bill will specifically address that situation.

I'm very pleased to rise in the House today to support this bill, because I believe that we rely on these people to protect us and it is very important that we show our emergency workers our support and protect them from having it come out of their personal pocketbook when they get into an accident when they are simply serving their community. People who are protecting their communities should not have to pay for the privilege of doing that with increased insurance rates.

I am very pleased that my colleague from Perth-Middlesex has put this forward. Certainly, as the parliamentary assistant in the Ministry of Community Safety

and Correctional Services—the folks we will be helping here are the good folks we deal with in our ministry who contribute to our community safety—I'm very pleased to support this bill today.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It is indeed a pleasure today to join my colleagues the members for Perth-Middlesex, for Guelph-Wellington and for Simcoe to support this private member's legislation, Bill 40.

One of the interesting books written as a result of 9/11 was by the former mayor of New York City, Rudolph Giuliani, called *Leadership*. In several of the chapters in that book he talked in detail about the heroic efforts of the police officers, the firefighters and the paramedics in the city of New York surrounding the tragic circumstances of 9/11. The pictures of firefighters, police officers and paramedics clawing the ground looking for signs of life after that very tragic situation will be forever etched in our memories. Indeed, firefighters, police officers and paramedics internationally shared that common bond, and that's what they do every day of their working lives.

I recall that two years ago, in June 2002, we had a hundred-year storm in the city of Peterborough. It resulted in extensive flooding of our streets. Sewers were backing up. Some seniors in very fragile health were stuck in their homes. The emergency command centre in the city of Peterborough was pressed into action. Every off-duty police officer, firefighter and paramedic was pressed into action. These groups rushed to their respective centres, ready for action.

During the critical 48 hours when the flood waters were still spilling all over the place, firefighters, police and paramedics, by their actions, reassured the nervous public and prevented many situations; they were there to reassure many members of the public who were going through a serious flood, as I said, the first time in a hundred years.

I recall that just last week in the city of Peterborough, a life ring was found floating in the Otonabee River. A neighbour along the Otonabee River immediately called the Peterborough fire department, who deployed the search-and-rescue unit to scour that river for hours and hours and hours, because potentially that could have been a very tragic situation. Fortunately, after several hours of searching the river, the Peterborough fire department found out that the life ring was simply a piece of debris that had floated into the river last fall. But it was their quick action, with off-duty people coming in to respond to the need.

Also in the city of Peterborough, through a suggestion made by the Peterborough professional firefighters, our fire trucks in the city of Peterborough are equipped with defibrillators. Now, in conjunction with the paramedics, if an individual has a cardiac arrest or other serious medical problems, we have a two-tiered response: The fire department arrives on the scene, followed up by the paramedics and ambulance service to bring quick care immediately to a person who may indeed be suffering a stroke or cardiac arrest.

Day in and day out, these individuals put their lives on the line to provide wonderful service to the citizens certainly in my community and all communities right across Ontario.

Last Tuesday evening I had the opportunity to chat with Bob Campbell, the president of the Peterborough Police Association, and David McFadden, the vice-president of the association. I indicated to those two gentlemen that my colleague from Perth-Middlesex was bringing this private member's bill forward on Thursday and that it would receive my full support.

It's an important thing to do. Often, we take for granted in our communities the great service provided by firefighters, police and paramedics. The challenges that those three groups face today are evolving; they are continuous and ever-changing. So if this bill moves forward—and I believe it should, with all-party support—it will be a real opportunity to correct a situation that I believe needs to be corrected. I'm surprised that it hasn't been corrected before now, because it's something we can do to show our great support for these people in our communities day in and day out.

I appreciate having the opportunity to reflect on this, and I press all members of this House to support this bill and move it forward in the next little while.

Mr Tascona: I'm pleased to join the debate with respect to the private member's bill brought forth by the member for Perth-Middlesex. It is a bill brought not only from personal experience in his family, which we've heard here today—and thank God it was a favourable outcome—but it's also brought in good faith, trying to protect a public service and making sure it is not unduly restricted by the costs that go along with providing public protection by an emergency service.

1030

Our party supports this particular bill in principle. We understand that the idea is to not overcharge or surcharge or raise rates for emergency service personnel. For example, a volunteer firefighter's personal insurance could be higher because of the risk with respect to driving a vehicle, a fire truck, to a scene where there's an emergency. This discourages people from volunteering. It discourages people from doing their job, let alone people who do volunteer work. That's a very important service, certainly for communities that do not have the resources to have full-time firefighters and the services they provide.

Certainly the bill, in its principle, is understandable. The member has put an amendment in here, "Risk classification systems, emergency vehicles." Under subsection (2) of 417.0.1, we have "Operation of emergency vehicle during an emergency." He goes on to state, "An emergency vehicle is being operated during an emergency if the vehicle is,..." I would only suggest that that's fairly exact language, and I think he'll understand when he has been here a little bit longer that he may want the flexibility to have a situation such as that covered in more circumstances.

I think what I would offer in terms of amending language would be that that particular piece of language,

"An emergency vehicle is being operated during an emergency," include "but is not restricted to," where the vehicle is. What you want is language in there that is going to include those four situations, but there may be situations other than those set out in (a), (b), (c) and (d) of this particular piece of legislation, so you do not want to restrict it to four situations which may not cover the entire area at a future time.

I offer that as a constructive amendment, because I think the member's intent is to ensure that there are no loopholes. If he doesn't want any loopholes, then he will take that constructive amendment seriously. The fact of the matter is that when you're dealing with this, he has brought it forth as an amendment in statute, and there may be regulatory power to add to that, but I think it's probably best to deal with the issue right now.

The bill is entitled An Act to amend the Insurance Act to protect emergency service providers from rate increases to their personal contracts of automobile insurance. Certainly no one disagrees with what this bill is trying to accomplish. We want to make sure also on our side that insurance companies respect and don't take advantage of not only the provider. I think it may also have to be looked at from the point of view—he wants to protect the individual, and that's why, I think, he has drafted this bill in a way that may be a little confusing. It reads, "No insurer shall use a risk classification system in classifying risks for a coverage or category of automobile insurance that permits an insurer to consider for purposes of a contract of automobile insurance, other than a contract covering the emergency vehicle...."

That may be something that you have to look at also. If they say, "OK, we're not going to deal with the cost for that particular individual in our risk classification; we'll just add it on to the vehicle," that puts pressure obviously on the budget, whether it's a fire department, a paramedical department or a police department, where the insurance company is going to make sure they get their pound of flesh out of the vehicle, as opposed to going after the individual. That also impacts public safety.

The way the law is set up with respect to emergency vehicles, and we had a situation like that last week in my riding, when you have an emergency vehicle out there, certainly the law is pretty clear in terms of how an operator has to respect red lights and respect and give notice to the public. Just because they use a vehicle, I don't know why that vehicle, whether it's a fire truck or a police car or another type of vehicle, brings it up to a risk factor. It's still a vehicle being driven.

As for the fact that it's going to an emergency, you don't see these individuals going into an area that puts the vehicle or themselves at risk. It's an emergency for the individual who is impacted. They use specific vehicles because those vehicles have the equipment necessary to deal with that emergency. They have individuals who drive that vehicle because they are experienced and have the expertise to deal with the situation.

I would suggest to the member that we focus not only on the individual who is driving the vehicle, but if we're

really in favour of public safety, I don't know why or how an insurance company can justify a vehicle as a risk classification just because that vehicle is targeted to go to an emergency scene. To me, there's going to have to be an awful lot of evidence. I don't think they would have a shred of evidence to prove that because a fire truck has to go to a fire, that vehicle is put at risk. The bottom line is that it's a specific vehicle to go to a fire. It's not put in the fire in terms of that particular situation. It's the same thing with a police car in terms of what work they're doing.

Obviously you get into situations where you have to look at how the driver has used the vehicle, but that's a matter that has always been dealt with in a civil court in terms of whether someone feels they've have been put at risk by the driver and the vehicle in question when they were crossing the street or whatever. We've had police car chases where innocent individuals have been injured. Certainly the officers are using their best judgment in terms of how to deal with that. The only thing they're trying to do is enforce the law and put public safety first. They're going after the perpetrator who has broken the law and has decided to flee the police. There's a judgment there that has to be dealt with. How insurers deal with emergency vehicles to me is just an arbitrary exercise in terms of trying to extract extra insurance fees in this situation.

I would suggest to the member that he not only focus on the individual but on the vehicle in question. I don't know how an insurance company can justify having increased insurance rates for an emergency vehicle just because it's targeted to be used in a specific situation. That might be something he may want to consider because that obviously impacts the budget situation for police, fire and paramedics. It should say in the legislation that you're not going to transfer the costs of the risk that you can't extract from the individual on to the police budget because they're driving the vehicle, so you basically top up and make sure you've got the fees you feel are necessary to protect the bottom line, because that's what it comes down to. I think that's something the member has to look at.

Other than that, I'm going to be sharing my time with other members. Those are the comments I have. The member for Perth-Middlesex has a bill that is worthy of further discussion.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I want to make it clear at the onset that New Democrats are going to be supporting this legislation.

Let's put this in perspective, please. First of all, we're talking about a private, for-profit auto insurance industry. Everybody's been skirting around the issue but the fact is they're greedy, porcine, incorrigible, beyond regulation. They just demonstrated \$2.6 billion in profits, a 600%-plus increase in profits after crying poverty to the former government and then to this one. And in the course of crying poverty, they persuaded two successive governments, first the Conservatives and then the Liberals, to reduce benefits and increase premiums, yet another

illustration of overt gouging by a greedy, overweight, bullying industry, an industry that, quite frankly, is nothing but the ragged cousin of the legitimate financial industry in this country, in North America. I'm going to speak about that a little more in a few minutes.

1040

Let's understand what the intent of the legislation is. It's clear that we do not want to reinforce any disincentives for emergency personnel in the course of their response or in the course of taking an injured person to medical treatment. We do not want to reinforce or encourage any disincentives to their performing their duties in as effective a way as they believe they can.

The issue then becomes much broader than this. I, for instance, was here and I supported the legislation that permitted volunteer firefighters to use green lights in their vehicles. In fact, a whole lot of Ontario is served by volunteer firefighters who use their own vehicles en route to an emergency. Some municipalities still aren't letting their volunteers use the green emergency lights. That's nuts. It's irresponsible and it's not fair to those women and men who are volunteer firefighters. Again, I'm not going to get into the minutiae to any great extent, because that's why we're going to go to committee. That's why I want the bill to pass on second reading so it can go to committee where I can rail against the private, for-profit, greedy, highway-robbing auto insurance industry at length. I will then deal with some of the minutiae in the bill, for instance, about the need for it to include volunteer firefighters who, out of necessity, are inevitably going to be using their own vehicles.

I'm concerned about the fact that it appears only to prohibit the consideration of an accident for the purpose of increasing rates—Mr. Wilkinson, please—rather than necessarily the consideration of a conviction. As everybody knows, and as police officers and firefighters and paramedics know, there are no exemptions in the Highway Traffic Act or the Criminal Code for police officers. There's all sorts of mythology about it, but there are no exemptions from the Highway Traffic Act or the Criminal Code. At the end of the day, when it's your kid or your spouse or your family member in that ambulance, you want that ambulance to go through as many red lights as it possibly can. It is the incredible dilemma that firefighters and cops and paramedics are inevitably put in. They're told, "Here is the law," and they know the law to the final person, yet they are similarly under incredible pressure to circumvent the law as much as they possibly can or else they become subjects of criticism then: "You didn't get there fast enough."

We also have to talk about creating some clear standards about the utilization of, for instance, lights and sirens, and some public education. I also supported the recent legislation that was passed here that required motorists effectively to yield to police vehicles, to fire vehicles, to vehicles displaying red lights, when they are pulled over on the shoulder of the road, because we've lost as many police officers on the side of the road doing investigations and issuing tickets, it seems to me, as we

have in other circumstances. It's an incredibly dangerous thing for a cop to pull somebody over, especially on a busy highway, and even more so at night, when you've got two or three lanes of traffic zooming by that police officer and the car being investigated that has been stopped.

I supported that legislation. I wished also that it had included a complete range of vehicles displaying warning lights when pulled over to the side of the road. Quite frankly, I think snowplow operators who have occasion to pull over to the side of the road on a 400 series highway, for instance, with their blue lights flashing, to get out to do some mechanical adjustments or unclog a piece of equipment deserve the same protection. Unfortunately, the rest of the chamber didn't agree with me in sufficient numbers.

I think we have to establish some pretty clear standards about the need to use emergency signals, and then public education. I am just amazed—amazed; it rots my socks—to drive on urban streets and on highways and see the incredible disdain the general public seems to have for emergency vehicles. Police cruisers, fire vehicles, are fighting with dough-heads who are either oblivious to the flashing red lights and the sirens or seem simply not to give a damn. I find it incredible. I put to you that we need an intensive program of public education, and if we have to implement legislative tools—there are some modest ones. But you see, the problem is enforcement, because having said all of this, as long as our police forces, firefighting services and paramedic services are understaffed and underresourced in community after community after community, the dangers for those firefighters, police officers and paramedics are increased and compounded.

So I say to you, as the author of this piece of legislation, that in the course of discussing this, we also have to talk about—because we're talking about making it as safe as possible for emergency personnel to respond as quickly as possible without necessarily abiding by the absolute liability required, at the very least under the Highway Traffic Act, so as to perform their duties and save lives. Well, then we also have to talk about the adequacy of staffing for firefighters, cops and paramedics, and enforceability.

I've got no qualms about putting the blocks to the insurance industry. They've put the blocks and put the boots to drivers and innocent victims in this province long enough. You know that I'm going to say to you that this is so piecemeal as to cause one some concern to the point of skepticism about its ability to address the issue. Because that private sector insurance industry is sleazy, they're snaky, they're slimy. They will weave and bob their way around this bill, as they have so many others in efforts to control premiums. Make no mistake about it.

So at the end of the day, the problem isn't cops who do their best, the problem isn't firefighters who do their best, the problem isn't paramedics who do their best; the problem is an insurance industry that is greedy, that is voracious, that has this insatiable appetite for profits and will continue to earn them on the backs not just of

premium payers but of innocent victims. At the end of the day, I invite the author of this bill to join with me in my decade-and-a-half-long campaign to build a public auto insurance system here in the province of Ontario like the folks in Manitoba and Saskatchewan and British Columbia have enjoyed for so many years, so we have real accountability, real fairness for innocent victims and fairness and affordability for premium payers, and that we have a rate-setting system that is based on true risk and not on arbitrary and capricious choice by the insurance industry.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I appreciate the opportunity to talk about Bill 40, the Emergency Service Provider's Insurance Protection Act, and it also amends the Insurance Act, just so people are aware that what we're talking about here is a very simple issue: insurance costs for our emergency workers that are being applied to their own personal insurance if they're in an accident doing their job.

I just want to stop for a minute and ask a simple question. If I were a construction worker and got hurt on the job, do I then not get house insurance for my own personal house? I mean, this is just ridiculous. It's silly to think we have to talk about this today. I commend the member for Perth-Middlesex for bringing this forward. It's a problem that has been identified and now we're going to correct it. It's very simple. We've got support from all sides. They're talking about collectively saying, "You know what? We've found a problem. Let's fix it. Let's get on with it."

I want to compliment and thank the members in the gallery who have come to join us, to hear the concerns being raised and to bring them forward. They've offered some ideas and some suggestions, and I suggest to you that when we get this bill to committee, we're going to iron those out. When this problem gets dealt with in an appropriate manner, we're going to be sending a signal that we care and that we're going to take care of our emergency response personnel. They already put their lives on the line, and now, to add insult to injury or to take that wound and throw salt in it, if they end up in an accident they're going to be attacked personally. "We're going to go after you personally and say that because you were doing your job in a very special, professional and trained way, and in most cases if not all, if through no fault of your own you get into an accident, we're going to punish you again for doing your job."

Think about my analogy regarding a construction worker who gets hurt on the site, and then an insurance company comes along and says, "You know what? You got hurt on the site building a house, so we're going to jack up the house insurance on your own home." It doesn't make sense at all. We've identified a problem and we're going to fix that problem.

1050

I want to talk to you about other things we've done. We've done special things. The member for Niagara Centre made the comment about a bill that was brought forward to protect our emergency response workers on

the road. I would echo his remarks, and I think he remembers that I brought that to the House's attention as well and I supported him. We both mentioned that green lights, blue lights, red lights, yellow lights, white lights—we had charts, and I shared my chart with him about the United States. Various states have varying degrees of protection for those people on the highways. Those are the types of things we look at.

When we see a problem as legislators, it is our responsibility—private members' hour is particularly the time, as it is very heart-wrenching to know, when if something has been brought to our attention by somebody, we can bring it to this place and everybody's got to pay attention to it. It's not the party's decision. It's an individual member's decision to bring it forward and say, "We want to solve this problem. I'm putting it before you. Will you help me?" That's what we're doing today.

I'd like to remind us that that's the important part about this place at this time. That is, when we bring private member's business forward, it deserves our attention. The good thing about it is that we can bring it to committee. Then we analyze it one more time and bring in the experts who can say, "We need to tweak this a little bit, because you forgot about something." I'll bring one of those points up, and that is defining "emergency."

I happen to know that when a fire truck is going from point A to point B, it might not be going to a certain type of call. There are levels of emergencies. It's the same thing with police officers. They now have, basically, an office on wheels. They're performing their tasks and duties in that office and they're moving from place to place. An accident doesn't necessarily mean they're going to a bank robbery. It could mean they're just going from point A to point B to continue doing their job. That might be another thing that needs to be reviewed and analyzed, the definition of an emergency.

I'm very proud to say that there were various times during my time in the opposition, as critic for public safety and security and the solicitor general and corrections and all the different names it was named over the last few years—Mr Hardeman's there telling me that he understands and agrees. Now it's community safety and corrections. I introduced a bill called An Act to amend the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act to require a minimum level of training for licensees and to require that uniforms and vehicles of security guards be readily distinguishable from those of the police.

There are some issues that we need to make sure people understand, that we hold higher, in terms of esteem and understanding and respect, our paramedics, our firefighters and our police officers. There's a special job they have that we've identified, and it is important for us to do whatever we can to let them do their jobs. It's hard enough to respond to an emergency, period, without having to be burdened and saddled with the other things we are talking about today. I'm proud to say that we've got our associations here supporting and representing and suggesting things that can happen to improve the legislation—not to scrap it, but to improve it to make it even better and speak to the real issue.

Today, we're speaking about this specific problem, of our emergency response people being tagged with insurance personally because of the job they do. It's not right, it's simply not right. I'm glad to say that it's not universally applied and that some insurance companies have not been doing that, but unfortunately, some have. Do they need a wake-up call? The commissioner didn't think it was happening—the superintendent. "You mean they're doing that? They're really doing that?" He didn't know. Now he knows and now the industry knows, and now we're going to legislate and are going to make sure that this problem doesn't haunt our emergency workers.

I want to make it quite clear that we need to work toward these types of solutions in this House the way we're doing it today. It is much more enjoyable, I can tell you, that when we bring private members' business forward, it can be discussed in a very logical, sequential way. There are going to be private members' hours where we don't agree. I hope we understand that in circumstances like this, we are the example of what we can accomplish when we all work together.

Thank you very much, and thank you to the member for bringing it forward.

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the private member's bill brought by my colleague from Perth-Middlesex, the Emergency Service Provider's Insurance Protection Act. I was not aware of this problem before, so I thank you for doing that. We certainly do need to protect our emergency service workers.

My riding is predominantly rural. Being a nurse, I've had many an ambulance ride with paramedics in quite life-threatening situations, so I appreciate their devotion and the need to protect all of our emergency workers.

Personally, I recently had a fire at my house. I live in a community that has many municipal boundaries, and I want to commend the fire departments that border the boundaries. They all work together to have the first and the fastest response to emergencies. It was the middle of the night. I want to thank the Galway-Cavendish-Harvey fire department for their quick response in that situation, for their professional manner and their follow-up at the scene for prevention and education, which, as another member has mentioned, we need to encourage more.

Being on rural roads, especially in the summertime when we have lots of extra tourists and people in our riding, we have many roads that are difficult to access. We are long distances from hospitals. I want to say that it's a challenge a lot of times. I want to appreciate the people in the area who do respond to emergency vehicles on the road and pull over. They're certainly working as communities together. We have emergency workers, firemen, the police associations, the firefighters' association and the volunteer fire departments all working together for a good common cause, and we should support this. We need to protect our volunteers and our emergency workers.

I want to thank the members of the association for their support for the member from Perth-Middlesex on

the private member's bill and for coming here today. I want to let you know you have my full support of this bill. It's much needed.

I will be sharing my time with my other colleagues.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I rise in support of this bill from the member from Perth-Middlesex and congratulate him on bringing it forward. Having spent 25 years driving one of those fire trucks, it's good to see the challenge now coming out.

It's not so much to do with the drivers of these trucks, but I see it as a way for insurance companies to get premiums they're not entitled to. They're suggesting all premiums are based on risk, and they're suggesting that the more these emergency drivers drive emergency vehicles, the more riskily they will be driving their own cars, which in my mind doesn't make sense. It would seem to me that driving under emergency conditions would make you a better driver and less apt to get into an accident with your own vehicle. But in fact, they're suggesting that they can increase premiums in order to get paid for something that happened on the job. I think that's totally wrong, and that's why it's very important that the bill is brought forward.

But I would like to go one step further and recommend to the honourable member that we also have a problem with our volunteers as they drive their vehicles to the scene of a fire or to the fire hall to get the fire truck because they're not on duty all the time. We have insurance companies that are raising premiums on cars because, in theory, there is a greater risk because on an emergency call, they may be driving differently than they would if they were going to a family function on a Sunday afternoon, so the insurance companies are raising rates to do that. They have absolutely no information that would suggest there are more accidents happening while these firefighters are doing that, but they've found an opportunity to increase premiums and to increase their revenues as this is happening.

I would ask the member, as the bill goes to committee, to consider including that part of the insurance regulation to eliminate the possibility that insurers cannot increase premiums to people based solely on the fact that they are a member of a volunteer fire brigade and may be driving their personal car to a fire. Obviously, they have insurance to cover accidents. A lot of people in our community are going to that fire, and they're not firefighters and they are likely as great a risk on the insurance company's road as our firefighters. I think I would ask him to consider that in his legislation.

1100

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Perth-Middlesex has two minutes to reply.

Mr Wilkinson: I want to start by thanking the member for Simcoe North and the member for Guelph-Wellington, who is the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, as well as my colleagues the member for Peterborough, the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, the member for

Niagara Centre, the member for Brant, the member for Haliburton-Victoria-Brock and the member for Oxford.

As I said in my initial speech, I believe there are public policy issues that will be raised if this bill sees the light of day and goes to committee. I want to say that I appreciate the suggestions by Mr Tascona that we may be able to make an amendment to broaden the scope of the bill and make it clear.

I also hear the suggestion made by the member from Niagara Centre. We had an opportunity in this province to have public auto insurance and a previous administration on that never happened. My bill does not wish to reopen that debate. My bill is focused on the police officers, the paramedics and the firefighters who are doing such a remarkable job. As the member from Peterborough said, "They are the people who go to the emergency," when all of us are running away from the accident; when we can't look; when they're like me, a father who freezes in an emergency situation. Who are the people that we count on to rise above that, above that human urge to run away and actually go to the emergency? It is, as I said, our most brave of public servants, and we need to support them at every opportunity.

We need to send a clear signal to the insurance industry that this practice, though it is rare, is completely unacceptable. That's why I want to again pledge that I look forward to having an all or non-partisan debate about this and to look at amendments in committee. Again, I'd like to thank all those who spoke to the bill. I ask for your support when we vote on second reading later this morning.

KEEP YOUR PROMISES ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR L'OBLIGATION DE TENIR LES PROMESSES ÉLECTORALES

Mr Wilson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 41, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act and the Members' Integrity Act, 1994 with respect to the election platforms of registered political parties / *Projet de loi 41, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections et la Loi de 1994 sur l'intégrité des députés à l'égard des programmes électoraux des partis politiques inscrits.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr Wilson has 10 minutes.

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): The idea for this piece of legislation that I put before the House today came to me during the all-candidates meetings; we had seven in the riding of Simcoe-Grey. I frankly felt sorry for some of my opponents who were espousing promises that were contained in their parties' election platform booklets, promises that I was pretty sure the Liberal government couldn't keep if they got elected into office.

In fact, the Liberal government, during the election period, set a new record by making some 231 promises that we have kept track of to date. They've broken 19 of

those promises in the first seven months of coming to office. This bill is an attempt to make it illegal for campaigns, for parties, to break the promises they make during election campaigns.

The lawyers wouldn't let me go as far as I wanted to go. I wanted to do the same thing that we did in the Taxpayer Protection Act and the balanced budget legislation passed under the Harris government. That is, if we ever ran a deficit, including this year, we would have to take a 25% cut in pay in the first year of running a deficit; cabinet ministers would have to take a 50% cut in pay the second year of running a deficit; and in the third year, we'd actually have to call an election should we have run a deficit. So there was a real penalty for breaking your promise to balance the books of the province of Ontario and to not to add to the debt of the province.

I think the summary of what this bill does was ably presented in a newspaper article in the Collingwood Enterprise-Bulletin dated March 30 of this year. It says, "Wilson ready to make Liberals keep their promises," and it's by Brad Holden. It says in part:

"The bill Wilson is proposing would require the leader of a recognized party to file a written statement with the Chief Election Officer prior to a general election, outlining what the party intends to do upon forming government.

"It would also require the provincial Integrity Commissioner to include in his annual report a tally of which promises contained in that leader's statement the government has actually introduced."

So it would require every party to give their election platforms to, first, the Chief Election Officer, and later, the party forming the government after the election would be required to give a written statement of the promises, the bills and legislation that they intend to bring forward during their time as government. Basically, the Integrity Commissioner would have their platform, and in his annual report he then would include a section on his opinion on which promises have been kept to date and which promises hadn't been kept. It's a way to try to hold the government of the day accountable for their election promises.

In the short time I have, I want to read a wonderful letter from Mr Ron Harding of Collingwood that appeared in the March 10 editions of the Stayner Sun and the Wasaga Sun this year. Two promises that the Liberals made during the campaign were as follows: "We will build a seniors strategy that guarantees our seniors are treated with respect and dignity." That was promise 129. Promise 142: "Our senior strategy will focus on keeping seniors active and well." As Mr Harding points out in his letter, the government is poised to raise prices or raise the cost of prescription drugs under the Ontario drug benefit program for all Ontario seniors. It says:

"Dear Editor:

"Seniors beware the Liberal claw. Dalton McGuinty's Ontario Liberal government is getting set to claw back one of our major seniors' benefits—trying to force seniors to start paying half the cost of our prescription drugs.

"This is part of the Liberals' pathetic effort to fight the deficit. The problem is that Dalton conveniently neglected to tell us about it before the election.

"It was referred to as 'tentative changes affecting Ontario drug benefit program' outlined in a booklet they recently released at Queen's Park."

He goes on to say that we should try and stop this trial balloon by the government. "If the suggestion doesn't get much media attention and there is minimal flak from the province's seniors, this travesty will be jammed through and set in concrete in the wink of an eye.

"We can do something about this."

He goes on to encourage people to sign the petition that's available in my offices in Alliston and Collingwood and by calling my toll-free number. So they broke two promises there—broken promises to seniors.

Other promises they broke come to mind, just as a short list I made this morning:

I can remember Sandra Pupatello in this House very adamantly trying to ensure that the Harris-Eves governments provided IBI treatment to autistic children over the age of six. They promised to do that and they've broken that promise. Just last week they indicated more money for autism, but they're actually in court with a number of parents who are trying to get fair treatment for their children over the age of six.

Reduce the use of private consultants. Cap hydro rates at 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour until 2006. Stop 6,600 homes on the Oak Ridges moraine. The Liberals also promised to cancel P3 hospitals in Brampton and Ottawa, which are private-public partnerships. They promised to hold a public inquiry into meat inspection.

McGuinty and the Liberals also promised not to raise your taxes, and one of the first bills they introduced here was to cancel the education property tax rebate of some \$475 per senior citizen household in this province that we had passed and that would have taken effect of January 1 of this year. One of the first bills they brought in was to cancel that promise, therefore costing all seniors more money with respect to their education property taxes.

They were going to provide two cents of the provincial gas tax for municipal transit. Well, we saw in the papers today and all last week that the Liberals are probably going to give that just to Toronto, and perhaps nothing for all of our small towns and villages that we represent in rural and small-town Ontario. And they promised to govern with honesty and integrity, something they're clearly not doing with respect to the Sorbara affair.

I want to elaborate on the autistic children promise. I think that's about the lowest thing I've heard in this place in a long time. For months and months the Liberal Party, while in opposition, hounded us. We knew the program to extend IBI services to autistic children over the age of six might cost up to \$1 billion. So as tempting as it might have been during the campaign, I certainly didn't promise that we could do that and my party didn't promise we could do that, because we knew it would be a very difficult commitment to keep. So, to provide autistic treat-

ment beyond age six, Dalton McGuinty said, "The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six.... In government, my team and I will work with clinical directors, parents, teachers and school boards to devise a feasible way in which autistic children in our province can get the support and the treatment they need. That includes children over the age of six." He actually said that in a letter to the parent of an autistic child on September 27, 2003.

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What is happening, according to Christina Blizzard of the Toronto Sun on January 21, is that "The government is appealing an injunction granting some parents of autistic children a temporary 90-day extension of IBI treatment" for children over age six. "Government lawyers are fighting the Human Rights Commission ruling—and now the Liberals are even seeking intervenor status at the Supreme Court of Canada in a similar court case involving parents of autistic children in British Columbia." It's a shame that they broke that promise.

Electricity rates: Today is April 1. I was the energy minister for some four years under the Harris government. We capped electricity rates. Now you are going to see electricity rates go up as high as 27% for some households, as high as 27% for businesses in the province. Farmers particularly are going to be hit extremely hard. They need another kick like a hole in the head at this point, because they are already going bankrupt with respect to mad cow disease and the government's lack of proper response to or support for our farmers. It's just going to absolutely devastate all of our farms; I think of dairy farms in particular, and chicken, poultry and beef, where the lights are on in many barns, and have to be, 24 hours a day. There are also greenhouses, as one of my colleagues mentions.

We all know hydro rates are going to go up and you've only seen the beginning of this, I say to the residents of Ontario.

They were going to stop 6,600 houses on the Oak Ridges moraine, and that affects my riding; the south end of my riding touches on the Oak Ridges moraine. What did they end up doing? Well, the Liberals promised that they would cancel those houses. It seemed to be a very clear promise made by the Premier. And what do we have? We see in the Toronto Star on October 17 that the minister, Mr Gerretsen, "was forced to announce that 5,700 houses will be built, and pleaded that the Liberals were perhaps naive for making that promise." At least there is a little bit of honesty there.

The fact of the matter is that there are 19 broken promises to date. My colleagues will elaborate on those. We need a mechanism in this province. Since you can't trust some politicians, we need an independent third party to review those promises and hold the government accountable.

In my election campaigns since 1990, I have made one promise. I have followed the advice of my predecessor, the Honourable George McCague, who sat in this House for some 15 years. He said, "Jim, all you can ever really

do is to promise to do a good job.” That is all I ever promise in my election campaigns. I promise to do a good job and I promise to do it with honesty and integrity. I hope the Liberal government will begin to implement some of their promises. The track record to date is disgraceful, and this is a way to try to make them accountable.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I stand to speak against Bill 41.

Interjections.

Mr Racco: I thought we were sent here by the people to provide leadership and to do what is good for the people. Surely, intervening when someone is speaking is highly unacceptable. I hope the members will allow me to express my opinion, and I will do the same for them. That is why the people sent us here. One of the reasons this House has not received the respect it should be receiving is because of this type of behaviour in the House. I take pleasure in reminding us all that maybe by acting a little more responsibly in this House, we will be able to do exactly what our constituents expect of us, that is, to deliver what is best for the people of Ontario. Now, Mr Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me just one second. Not only are some members intervening when they shouldn't, they're not even sitting in their seats. I'd ask for order. Continue.

Mr Racco: Let me tell you what my constituents of Thornhill and Concord are expecting me to do in this House. It is to do what we indicated during the election we were going to do. They don't need bylaws or directions in writing that try to force them to do things that tomorrow don't make sense. The people are looking for leadership, that we do the right thing. Certainly my constituents were very disappointed when the Tories decided to sell the 407, the biggest issue in Thornhill. Those individuals sold the 407 so they could balance the books. They sold it for \$3.1 billion when the 407 at that time was worth \$12.5 billion. Let me remind all of you that that is a difference of \$9.4 billion. If you took all this money, \$9.4 billion, and invested a portion of it in building all the subways we are talking about, whether that be the Spadina extension to York University and to the corporate centre of Vaughan or the one to Scarborough or the one to the airport or any other transportation system that we have been speaking about for years, we would still have money left over, if the Tories had not sold out the people of Ontario.

That is what the people of Thornhill want to make sure doesn't happen. They want to make sure that when we sell something, we sell it at market value, not at a discount. The \$9.4 billion is a disgrace that I will repeat over and over again while I have breath in my body. That was the biggest robbery anywhere in this world, and nobody has gone to jail yet on this matter.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The standing orders are pretty specific in terms of speaking on the matter in

question. He's not even speaking on the matter. We've got a bill in front of us. Can he speak to the bill?

The Deputy Speaker: Well, we'll leave that to my interpretation.

Mr Racco: I certainly intend to speak on the bill. I felt that we were talking about politicians making promises. That's part of the bill, and that's what I intend to do.

The Liberal Party, in the last election, made it very clear that we were going to put money into the public education system, and we certainly did it. We don't have to have somebody forcing us to do that. We were committed and we delivered, and we will deliver even more in the future.

Also, the past government, under Mike Harris's leadership, closed 45 hospitals in this province. My area was significantly affected. The North York General Hospital and the other hospitals associated with that were affected. The Branson hospital, which a number of my constituents used, certainly was significantly reduced and forced to amalgamate, even though they were not in favour of it.

We all know what the Tories have done to the environment. They certainly reduced their contribution and we have a significant problem in our province. That is what the constituency of Thornhill doesn't want to see happen. They don't need anyone to say what must be done in writing. Statements are made during an election, of course. They want to have leadership that will respond properly, that will use our knowledge and know-how to implement what we indicated during the election.

The Tories, who say they do what they promise, promised a balanced budget in the last election. We all know there is a \$5.6-billion deficit, but we have also been learning lately about more than \$2 billion in unfunded liability. We also should know—nobody speaks about that, but I certainly do—that normally in business, we put money aside for a rainy day so we can buy the assets or equipment or whatever we need in the future. We normally put money aside, and that is not accounted.

That is what the people of Thornhill are looking for, to deliver on what we said in the election and not be forced in writing.

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to introduce to the assembly the students from Smithville District Christian High School who have joined us here today.

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order, but we welcome them this morning.

Further debate?

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I'm very pleased to join in the debate today on Bill 41, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act and the Members' Integrity Act, 1994 with respect to the election platforms of registered political parties.

This bill is about accountability. It's about making political parties accountable for their election promises. It's about trust in politicians. It's about having politicians who say one thing in an election campaign and actually deliver on what they say. This is certainly not the case with what happened in the past election.

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I'd like to read from today's paper. This is obviously a very current topic. A headline in today's Toronto Sun says: "McFlip, McFlop.

"Enough with the lies, Premier McFly? But here we go again—with yet another broken promise by the Liberals, as today (April Fool's Day) Dalton McGuinty lifts the caps on electricity prices in a province whose manufacturing-based economy relies on safe, reliable and affordable hydro."

Now, whether you agree or disagree that the price of electricity should go up, the fact is that Dalton promised to maintain the cap on electricity prices during the election campaign, and he is very, very clearly breaking that promise today.

He made a very clear promise during the election campaign to do with small business, and I'd like to read further from this article. It says: "Small businesses, who are the province's largest job creators, are getting hit with a double whammy as McFly breaks another promise and lifts the Tory's commercial property tax cap. Businesses have also been hit with McFly's rollback of corporate tax relief, plus a new blue box tax."

If I remember correctly, many times we saw Dalton in the news during the election campaign saying something along the lines of—

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me, member for Parry Sound-Muskoka. Just take your place for a minute. I think we should attempt, when referring to another member, to either use their position or, at the very least, their last name. Thank you.

Mr Miller: Yes, Mr Speaker. I'll respect that. The Premier, during the election campaign, said, "I won't raise your taxes, but I won't lower them either." That was a very clear statement that I certainly saw several times. I'm personally very concerned about the disregard for business in the province of Ontario that we're seeing, and I'm concerned about the fact that this is a broken promise.

We saw as of January 1 this year, for medium-sized businesses in the province of Ontario, an effective 27% increase in taxes. The tax rate would have been 11% for medium-sized businesses as of January 1 of this year. It is now 14%. That is a 27% increase and a very clearly broken promise. I worry about the effect that will have on the economy of this province.

That 27% seems to be a popular number. Today's increase in electricity prices above 750 kilowatt hours is also a 27% increase in the price you pay for electricity. The removal of the cap on property tax for businesses is also effectively another tax increase. When you add them all together, they are definitely going to adversely affect businesses.

During the election campaign, the Premier talked about the possibility of tolls on highways to pay for highway construction. What he said at that time was that he would consider tolls where there's an alternative route. Yet just recently in Sudbury, he talked about the possibility of tolling on Highway 69. What I have asked

in the Legislature and would like to know is, what is the alternative route to Highway 69? Does he consider driving to North Bay via Highway 11 the alternative route to 69? I don't think that's a reasonable alternative route. So I consider this another broken election promise, and I certainly hope they don't follow through on this. That is certainly the opinion of most people in the north.

There's a current poll going on in Sault Ste Marie where 80% of the people say this would be a bad idea. I quote from the Sault Star from Friday, March 26:

"No Toll for Highway 69.

"Sault Ste Marie city council should urge the Ontario government to unequivocally and immediately declare Highway 69 south of Sudbury to be a toll-free road.

"A similar demand ought to be sent to Queen's Park by every municipality in northeastern Ontario. This is a regional concern rather than a problem for Sudbury alone....

"Until even the possibility of a toll road is taken off the table, economic development for the entire northeast will be compromised. What entrepreneur in his right mind is going to invest in the region without knowing the transportation costs?...

"Queen's Park should clarify immediately that it will not put a toll on Highway 69 or any other northern Ontario route that has no alternatives. Every day it dithers is another day the north suffers."

As the critic for the north, I certainly will keep pushing that issue.

Another broken promise that has been in the Legislature recently, certainly that we've been pressing every day, is promise number 16, "Govern with honesty and integrity." This is from the throne speech: "Your new government has made a commitment to bring an open and honest and transparent approach to government." That was November 20. Yet Finance Minister Greg Sorbara refuses to step aside while the Ontario Securities Commission, Revenue Canada and the RCMP investigate the company of which he was a director for 10 years and a member of the audit committee. Sorbara also knew about the investigations and retained responsibility for the OSC for 66 days before the company finally made them public. He didn't bother to tell the Premier in those 66 days, which is a little shocking. We've been pressing that issue every day in question period. Yesterday, the general government committee, with a Liberal majority, did away with the possibility, the request from Marilyn Churley, to look into this affair further. That's democratic renewal in action.

I could go on with many more broken promises, but I know there are others who would like to speak as well.

But last night while watching the National, there was a segment about increasing voter participation in elections. There was a panel of students and a political science professor who said the thing that needs to happen to get more voter participation in the process is that the general public needs to be able to trust politicians. Why would the general public trust Ontario provincial politicians when the current government is so blatantly breaking so

many promises? I quote from the Toronto Star Web site: "I am on the verge of never voting again because every member of every party makes campaign promises that they always break, although the speed that McGuinty is breaking his is truly astonishing and unprecedented." Another quote: "The attitude of this government is typical of the disappointing governments in the developing world—promise anything to win the elections and, once elected, blame everything on the previous government." So I think we need to establish some trust. It really is a sad day when we need a private member's bill to ensure that political parties keep their promises. I think it can be said that in the time that we were in government, a promise made was a promise kept. It was something that we stuck to.

I commend the member from Simcoe-Grey and support his Bill 41, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act and the Members' Integrity Act, 1994 with respect to election platforms of registered political parties. I'll be voting for it.

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I am pleased to rise today to speak on Bill 41. My comments are being made knowing full well that today is April Fool's Day. Back in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, I know the constituents can draw comparisons between this bill and its debate on this date. I would be foolish to support it, and in the minutes allotted to me I wish to outline the reasons why.

I would like to put this scenario before the members of the official opposition: Let's say they were elected to a government where the Liberals had left them with a \$5.6-billion deficit on a new government. First of all, I say this wouldn't happen, but just imagine for a moment that it did. Would they continue to forge ahead with election ideas and ideals—what they call promises—or would they rejig those ideas and ideals and work with them over the next four years in a clear, precise and thoughtful way? That's what we're going to do; that is what we are doing. The Tories left us with this deficit, and they left us with a public safety deficit, which is listed in the auditor's report, and also with an energy deficit, as outlined in the Epp report.

If Bill 41 were to pass, how would a government possibly deal with such a predicament? We do not need a bill to require the leader of a party to give the Chief Election Officer a statement declaring the measures and bills the party intends to pursue if they form government. No, what we need is a clear program of ideas and ideals and a government that is determined to see to fruition those ideals which we promised.

As I campaigned door to door in the last election, as Mr Wilson did, I made one promise, and he did too: to represent my constituents to the best of my ability. No promises, just a platform of ideas and ideals. Yes, I was proud to run on Growing Strong Communities and on Growing Strong Rural Communities, on The Health Care We Need, on Excellence for All. With the ideas and ideals expressed in our platform, the McGuinty govern-

ment is changing the direction of government and dealing with the messes we have inherited from the Tories. As we are doing in health care with Bill 8—and I'm proud to say that I've done a lot of work on Bill 8—we are delivering real, positive change that will make Ontario strong, healthy and prosperous.

1130

We don't need Bill 41 to tell Ontarians that—listen to this—we declared that health care dollars will be invested wisely—Bill 8; we've increased the minimum wage; we've announced an intention to freeze college and university tuition; we've hired 50 more prosecutors as we work to build safe communities; we've introduced a bill to impose a one-year moratorium on further urban development on rural and agricultural lands; we are moving to create a permanent greenbelt in the Golden Horseshoe; we are making Ontario's emission standards the toughest in North America; we've removed the supervisors—yes, we did—from the Hamilton, Ottawa and Toronto school boards, giving the trustees and the parents and those people who have the voice a voice in their local democracy; and, yes, we passed legislation promoting excellence in learning for all Ontario students by repealing private school tax breaks. We've done a lot, and we hold our six-month record before Ontarians—saying, though, that we will have great mountains to climb as we tackle the \$5.6-billion deficit. Time and again we hear the member for Nepean-Carleton crying, "Shame" on our government. Well, I am not ashamed of our accomplishments to date, nor am I ashamed of the steps we will take in the future as we work to overcome the problems of the past.

The member for Simcoe-Grey talked about promises and the breaking of them by our government. I wish I could walk across this House and hand him and his party the bill for the inherited mess we have received.

Talk about breaking promises; from the Tory campaign promises of 2003 that they could not keep, nor could they deliver a plan to keep, listen to this: "We will not run a deficit." We are looking at a \$5.6-billion deficit, \$2.2 billion in unfunded liabilities, and \$5.2 billion in tax cut promises committed to. Imagine that added on to \$5.6 billion if they were in the government now. I can't understand.

This was another promise—and 94% of promises were not accounted for in the Tory platform costing backgrounder; a backgrounder presented 94% of the promises not costed—a promise to upload 1,000 rural bridges a year for 12 years at a cost of \$4 billion, or \$333 million per year, yet only \$41 million per year was budgeted in the platform.

These are promises—I call them ideas and ideals, but they refer to them as promises—that could not be kept if they were in government, and to think that they would be added on to \$5.6 billion which we did not know about. We have great hurdles, and there's no way with that record that I could ever support Bill 41.

Mr Tascona: I'm certainly pleased to join in the debate with respect to the private member's bill brought

forth by my colleague from Simcoe-Grey, a bill entitled the Keep Your Promises Act.

In this particular situation, the member is our critic for the Management Board of Cabinet. He's introduced this piece of legislation, which I think has merit. He's been a member here since 1990, and I think he knows what he's doing in this particular area.

The bill he is putting forth, the Keep Your Promises Act, amends the Election Finances Act to require the leader of a recognized party to file with the Chief Election Officer during a general election a written statement of what their party intends to implement on forming the government. The bill also amends the Members' Integrity Act, 1994, to require the Integrity Commissioner to include in his annual report a statement of which promises contained in the leader's statement the government has implemented and introduced. The bill will allow for more accountable and transparent government. It will hold the governing party's feet to the fire and will force the government to be guided by their commitments to the people of Ontario.

The McGuinty Liberals are batting about 1,000 in the field of broken dreams. It's quite devious for the Liberal Party to promise in every all-candidates' debate and in every advertisement that they won't raise your taxes, and then to form the government and introduce the largest tax increase in Ontario's history. That's just a fact.

What we're dealing with here—

Interjections.

Mr Tascona: Perhaps I can speak. I'm being heckled from behind by the members from Guelph and North Bay, but I'd like to speak.

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): It isn't me speaking, but I can, if you like, and I'm the member for Nipissing.

Mr Tascona: The hydro rate increases—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Tascona: Mr Speaker, can I speak?

The Deputy Speaker: I just called order.

Mr Tascona: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Maybe they can respect the Speaker in that respect.

We have obviously dealt with other issues. The hydro rate increase, which came into effect today, is no April Fool's joke, I can tell you that. I got a call today from a constituent who has five children. Three are special-needs. They're in a situation where they're going to exceed the cap without doubt. Their usage will be in the 2,200 range because they have to have it on for medical reasons. She's asking me, "What is going to happen with respect to my hydro rate? What is the government going to do to protect me?" She told me she tried to contact the Ministry of Energy and, in fact, when she did, they hung up the phone on her.

I can say very assuredly that we're not going to drop this issue with respect to what people are going to do who have a legitimate health care reason for exceeding this cap. We have a twofold cap now. They're going to go into the area where there is the higher rate, and they need some help. I put it to you that when we were in the

campaign, the Leader of the Opposition, as he was at the time, was very clear that there was going to be a cap, that the cap was going to be kept in place, and then within days after the election, he said, "The cap's coming off."

As I said, these increases will start to kick in today when the cap on the first 750 kilowatt hours jumps from 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour to 4.7 cents, and to 5.5 cents per kilowatt hour on power consumed above the threshold. That's the situation facing my constituents, and they're probably going to use double or triple the amount. That's what they'd normally use because they have children with special needs and they need to know what we're going to do to help them.

I put that to the Liberal government, that they're hopefully going to have a plan to help individuals who are not going to be in a position to pay those hydro rates. It's not going to be just one individual; it's going to be many.

I commend the member from Simcoe-Grey because when you get into election campaigns and promises are made, you owe it to the public to tell them what you're going to do. That's transparency. It's also accountability in telling them, "OK, here's what we're going to do and this is how we're going to do it." That's what elections should be about, rather than flip-flopping after the election and hurting people, because a lot of people are going to be hurt after this day with respect to hydro rate increases. They relied on the promises that were made during the election and now they're finding out they're not going to happen.

The Keep Your Promises Act brought forth by my colleague from Simcoe-Grey has a lot of merit, and I think it should be taken seriously.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I must admit this is a bill that at first blush, when I read it, I considered purely political; I must admit I did. It's called Keep Your Promises Act. The member from Simcoe-Grey has put down his thoughts on what this bill might do to make all of us better politicians.

Upon reviewing the bill and reading it, I noticed that in many ways it is actually superior to the bill the Tories brought in called the Taxpayer Protection Act. That piece of onerous legislation, which was supported, I think, by far too many members of the previous House or previous Houses, did a number of things. It had a very direct bias against tax increases. If you wanted to increase taxes, you had to do referendums, you had to do all kinds of things. It had a very direct bias, on the contrary, for program cuts. So you had no choice. You couldn't raise taxes, so therefore you had to cut programs.

This bill is much better, because there are no referendums or fines contained within the bill. It is purely a political act that he is requesting. It is better than his own Tory Taxpayer Protection Act and is his attempt to make it just a little bit better. I started to read some more into this and tried to discover whether or not this bill should be supported.

1140

There are some very real problems with the bill. One of them, I would suggest, is that the Integrity Commis-

sioner, who since the inception of that position within this House has always stood above the fray. He is a person of some renown. I think he himself, and perhaps all of his predecessors, are people of some renown who have come to the service of the Legislature from judicial positions or other important positions in the community and are able to stand above the fray.

In fact, this will put him into the fray. It will put him into the fray of this Legislature in much the same way as the auditor is called upon yearly to comment on government programs, government waste, government ineptitude, and in much the same way we ask the Environmental Commissioner to report yearly, or from time to time, on places and times and occasions when the government has not acted in the best interests of the environment.

What this bill is going to do is ask that a third mandarin, a third bureaucrat, a third impartial person, be brought in and become very political. That may be awkward, but I'm going to give the benefit of the doubt to the member from Simcoe-Grey and say there is a possibility this may be of benefit to this House.

For it to succeed—the bill is rather silent on this and maybe it requires regulations or further studies if it passes this reading—it would require, in my view, a great many more staff to go into the Integrity Commissioner's office. Those staff who are there at present would not be able to look through, for example, the 231 promises or more that were made by the Liberals in the run-up to the election. They would not be able to look at all the promises the Conservatives made or indeed all the promises New Democrats made leading up to the election.

They would have to become very political in their own right. They would have to work hand in hand with the auditor to try to find out and look at whether the costs were realistic, whether they were appropriate, whether they had been vetted properly. It would become a very political act. Now, we already have people who do that for us. They're called the press. They do that kind of work literally every day. They have done a pretty good job of keeping this government and the previous governments of this province in line in terms of whether or not promises were broken. I listened at some great length to the member from Perry Sound where he was quoting an example from today's press. Today's press is outlining some of the problems.

Having put the whole thing in balance, I don't think the bill is necessarily a bad bill. It is one that requires more study. It is one that requires a great deal of fine-tuning. It is one that will cost the taxpayers additional money in the form of additional civil servants and resources that would need to be made to the Integrity Commissioner's office. But there is always merit in looking at what politicians promise and what they say before elections and what they deliver after.

As the members opposite in the government said, it's absolutely remarkable to me that members of the former government can stand here and say that they were going to be able to keep the promises they made. It's absolutely

remarkable to me that they are able to say they would not have run a deficit. I don't know how they could not have run a deficit unless they were to have sold literally billions of dollars in public assets to finance their last year in office when everything seemed to go wrong, everything from Hydro—literally everything. Would they have sold the liquor control board? I don't know. Would they have sold off a chunk of Algonquin Park? I don't know. Would they have sold off TVO? I don't know. So it works two ways. I would be very curious to see if the Integrity Commissioner, looking at all those things, would have thought or said whether they had kept their promise.

Having said that again, you run into the conundrum. The press has already reported on all of that and the people of Ontario have already decided, on all that, that they had had enough.

Again back to, what would the Integrity Commissioner look at? Right away I think the Integrity Commissioner would have his or her hands quite full looking at this present government. In the two minutes or so that I have left, I'd like to go through just a couple of the things that were promised that now appear to have bitten the dust:

The promise that we would set high ethical standards and then allow the finance minister to stay on as finance minister;

The promise to keep hydro in public hands, but then hire your Liberal friend John Manley to push for OPG sell-offs;

The promise to stop hiring consultants and then give a fat contract to Peter Donolo;

The promise to protect the Oak Ridges moraine and then allow developers to pave it over;

The promise to stop P3 hospitals, but then renegotiate the deal;

The promise to protect and promote public health, but then go to court and claim the government has no responsibility for public health;

The promise to ensure independence of legislative committees, and we all saw the independence of the legislative committee yesterday;

The promise to cap hydro rates for 2006—today is April 1, and we see that that promise was broken pretty fast.

The promise to lower auto insurance rates with an industry that is making profits 600% more than last year, and the auto rates do not in any way seem to be declining;

The promise for autistic children—now that's a real beauty, because this government is taking them and their families to court to ensure that they do not get the services they need once they turn six years old.

The promise to the people of Kawartha Lakes, which is, to me, one of the most serious—the promise to honour their referendum if they no longer wanted to stay in an amalgamated city that clearly does not work for them. The promise was made, and even after those people, in a democratic and minister-sanctioned referendum, voted to

get out of amalgamation, this government is willing to break that, and I would think for no apparent reason.

For those reasons, on balance, I will be supporting the bill.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this bill. I have to agree with the member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh; it appeared to me this must be an April 1 joke to some degree. I say that because this bill, in my view, shows definitely a lack of understanding of our parliamentary democracy. The other part it shows—and I don't want to use the word “hypocritical,” because you can't use it. But it's definitely a tremendously cynical way of doing politics in this Legislature. I'm actually surprised at the member for Simcoe-Grey having the audacity to bring this forward with a straight face, considering his government's track record. According to many objective observers and experts, this shows again that there is a continuation of this negative, divisive, contradictory rhetoric and it's without substance.

There are ways that we want to restore and enhance the integrity of our democratic process. We, the current Ontario government, led by Premier Dalton McGuinty, are doing just that. We talk about transparency and accountability and we've done something about it. For instance, when we take a look at OPG and Hydro One, we have removed the cloak of secrecy that was put on these entities by the former government. We have removed that. We now have an ability to access information, because that is what good government is about.

1150

I heard the member speak about the Taxpayer Protection Act. You may have forgotten, but you actually broke that Taxpayer Protection Act by bringing in legislation, I believe two years ago. You did that. But there's this rhetoric, the nonsense I'm hearing from the opposition, that this type of legislation somehow is about good government. It isn't about good government. It's just a cynical, political stunt on April 1 in the Ontario Legislature. That's what it is.

When you talk about good government, one of the things that certainly got my ire up when we were in opposition was the partisan advertising, tax dollars continually spent on advertising promoting a partisan agenda. That means the government of the day did not understand the tradition of this place, of the parliamentary system, of our ministerial responsibilities in the ministries, that you don't use taxpayer dollars to promote yourself as a partisan entity. Yet they did that.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It filled up my blue box.

Ms Di Cocco: It filled up many blue boxes across this province. We've banned that. We've actually banned partisan advertising. We have a bill that is going to ban it.

Do you remember the outrage in this House—you were part of the executive, I believe—when under your government \$10 million was approved by a few members of your executive council for professional sports teams? That's the kind of government we had here.

Mr Leal: That no one could account for. They all said, “I wasn't part of it.”

Ms Di Cocco: Exactly. Nobody knew anything about it, but \$10 million of the people's money was going to be given to professional sports teams.

This is from someone who has been in a government that chronically and habitually said one thing and did another, set one set of rules for themselves and one set of rules for others. He can stand in his place today with a bill such as this talking about promises kept?

Do you remember that you weren't going to close any hospitals? You closed 45 hospitals during your term. Do you remember when you said that the tolls on Highway 407 were only going to rise 2%? What happened? Do you know by how much they've risen? By 203%. Remember when you said that a smaller Legislature was going to cost less, that you downsized this place because you said it would cost less? It actually cost \$600,000 more after you came in with a smaller Legislature.

All I say is this: A choice was made on October 2, and we have a government in place that is going to be responsible and thoughtful. It's about good government.

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I want to thank the member from Simcoe-Grey for introducing the Keep Your Promises Act.

It is difficult when you're in politics and you go to the schools and to the communities and they'll say, “The Liberals promised that they would do this when they got in, but now they're not living up to their word.” That reflects on all of us as politicians. We're out in the community. I was a nurse before and held in high regard, and now, when I'm on the streets in my village, people say, “But you politicians don't keep your promises.” It gives us all a bad name.

I want to mention a few things. There's a high proportion of seniors in my riding, the third-highest in Ontario. You've increased their taxes. You took the seniors' tax credit away. Their hydro rates are going up. You never said that their hydro rates were going to go up. You did not say they would increase. Now you're looking at the Ontario drug benefit plan? I have thousands of letters in my office. How are you treating seniors? Seniors are offended.

Farms, small businesses: I can hear the barn doors closing, the stores closing, because they can't afford the taxes, they can't afford the hydro rates. What are we doing for small business? In my area, small business is the backbone of all our jobs, our employment, our economy. We are not supporting them. We're losing business and we're losing jobs.

I speak to municipalities all the time, and they're certainly looking forward to promise number 46, where we will invest in public transit by allowing two cents of the existing provincial gas tax to go to municipalities. Is that going to be rural or is that just going to be urban? What are we doing to support the rural municipalities for their infrastructure?

It says here also that you're going to guarantee long-term funding for our rural communities—number 225.

Well, I can tell you, they're looking for some long-term funding. We were giving them a break by taking back municipal bridges. They need more infrastructure money. These are promises that are in here.

Promise 222: "We will make water in rural communities safe." The number of small community centres, the number of municipalities, churches—how are they going to operate? How are they going to do their fundraisers in the summertime with their beef barbecues? How are they going to continue?

In the city of Kawartha Lakes, there's a huge water project is going on. They need to have more provincial help for their new water system. You guaranteed, and I'm hoping you're keeping this promise, clean water across Ontario. This needs to be kept for health care.

For health care, in promise 201, "We will give rural communities a voice and provide them with stable funding so they can chart their own course. We will protect health care and education and tailor these essential services to the specific needs of rural Ontario." Then the other day, they cancelled the program for free tuition for nurses to work in underserved areas in northern Ontario. Nurses are the front line.

Doctor recruitment: a huge problem with a lack of doctors and front-line general practitioners and family doctors in our communities. Where are the benefits? Are you going to be giving free tuition for doctors to work in underserved areas? What are we doing with foreign-trained doctors? Are we going to increase their spaces?

So I rise today in support of my colleague from Simcoe-Grey and the Keep Your Promises Act. The public and all of us here on this side of the House are watching to see that you're going to support our communities and all these different aspects with the Keep Your Promises Act. The public expects it. We as politicians have to set the bar higher.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Simcoe-Grey has two minutes to reply.

Mr Wilson: I want to thank my colleagues who spoke in favour of the bill: the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka, the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, the member for Beaches-East York, and the member for Haliburton-Victoria-Brock.

I just want to say that if you don't support this legislation, the Keep Your Promises Act—and I hope all members will—then you're going to see more and more requests from the public for citizen-initiated referenda. You're going to see recall legislation introduced in this House by opposition members, I would think.

People are very, very frustrated. As Mrs Scott just eloquently said, you've got to keep your promises. As you break your promises, you make all politicians all across the world look bad. The fact of the matter is, you shouldn't make promises in the first place that you can't keep. We need something, since you're incapable of keeping your promises, and this bill is an attempt to make sure, as Mr Miller said, that politicians actually do what they said they were going to do during the election campaign. Clearly you're not doing that.

I want to touch on one thing that really discredited the members of the government who spoke against my bill this morning, and that is 45 hospital closures. I was the Minister of Health for two and a half years who did the hospital restructuring. I can only name two hospitals that actually closed in the province. One's in Pembroke, and that was because there were two hospitals very close to each other and they were amalgamated. The other one was the Wellesley Hospital, which was very old, needed tens of millions of dollars in upgrades just to fix the boiler system. I remember, before she died, Anne Archibald in my riding calling it the worst, dirtiest hospital she had ever been in for dialysis treatment, and that hospital had to close. As a result, St Mike's got expanded, Sunnybrook got expanded and eight new hospitals are being built today. It's the largest construction project in the history of health care in this province since hospitals became incorporated. You're discrediting yourselves by using briefing notes that say 45 hospitals are closed. You don't know what you're talking about.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for private members' public business has expired.

EMERGENCY SERVICE PROVIDER'S INSURANCE PROTECTION ACT (INSURANCE AMENDMENT), 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA PROTECTION DES FOURNISSEURS DE SERVICES D'URGENCE (MODIFICATION DE LA LOI SUR LES ASSURANCES)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We will deal first with ballot item number 7. That's second reading of Bill 40.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, it will be referred—

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask that the bill be sent to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, and I request the support of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: The member has moved that it be moved to the—

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

KEEP YOUR PROMISES ACT, 2004 LOI DE 2004 SUR L'OBLIGATION DE TENIR LES PROMESSES ÉLECTORALES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We will now deal with ballot item number 8, second reading of Bill 41.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Bring in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1202 to 1207.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour, stand and remain standing until recognized by the table.

Ayes

Baird, John R.	Hudak, Tim	Scott, Laurie
Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Tascona, Joseph N.
Bisson, Gilles	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Brown, Michael A.	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Colle, Mike	O'Toole, John	Yakubski, John
Dunlop, Garfield	Prue, Michael	
Hardeman, Ernie	Runciman, Robert W.	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will stand and remain standing until recognized by the table.

Nays

Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.
Broten, Laurel C.	Hoy, Pat	Patten, Richard
Brownell, Jim	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Smith, Monique
Craiton, Kim	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Di Cocco, Caroline	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 19; the nays are 18.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. This House is—

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, I'm ahead of myself again. Mr Wilson, I'm sorry.

Mr Wilson: I would ask if it's appropriate to have the bill referred to the general government committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1212 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SAFE DRINKING WATER REGULATIONS

Mr John Yakubski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): The environment minister recently announced that she will proceed with the implementation of regulation 170/3 concerning non-treated water systems. This regulation is going to have a devastating effect on small business, campgrounds, community halls and churches throughout rural Ontario. Many of them will simply have to close, as they cannot withstand the financial burdens being placed on them by this government through the implementation of this regulation.

The township of Bonnechere Valley in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has announced that the Gratton Hall will no longer be available because of this regulation, which requires that all community halls, small businesses and churches not on a treated system test for

72 parameters, even if there is no pre-existing water quality problem.

Some campground owners have already told me that they will close. Others, such as Angela Burgess of Renfrew, indicated that they will have to reconsider whether or not they can continue to operate under these conditions.

Great valley events such as the Wilno chicken supper at St Mary's Catholic Church will be threatened by this regulation. St John's Lutheran, Augsburg, faces a bill of \$38,000. There is no way they can afford this.

What has the minister done? She has taken out expensive ads in the newspapers, but given no money or assistance to rural Ontario. Mark my words: This regulation will close halls, bankrupt churches and cripple the tourism industry in rural Ontario. I say to the minister and the government, open your eyes before it's too late.

INVESTOR EDUCATION MONTH

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise today both as a member of this House and as a member of the financial community. Today marks the beginning of the seventh annual Investor Education Month, a public awareness campaign designed to encourage the public to take an interest in their own financial affairs.

This year's theme is "Knowledge is your best investment." It will be marked by a variety of public seminars and events across the country, including our province of Ontario, to raise financial awareness. This campaign will emphasize the fact that everyone can benefit from investor education.

Families and individuals who are trying to make their way through the myriad of financial products and services available are encouraged to engage the services of a professional financial adviser. A professional adviser can help investors make sense of financial issues and help them maximize any opportunities that may present themselves in each individual circumstance. By developing these relationships on a long-term basis, consumers can rely on a knowledgeable professional who can provide them with expert advice and help them to plan to achieve their financial milestones. As a certified financial planner, I can personally attest that these knowledgeable consumers with a plan do much better than those without one.

I submit to you today that Investor Education Month is an ideal time for the people of Ontario to focus on attaining greater financial literacy, a lifelong benefit for them, their families and our economy.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I'm the proud representative of the maple syrup capital of Ontario, the county of Lanark. Right now across my riding, the sap is running. That means that those who tap our local woods are busy turning this natural nectar into pure maple syrup.

However, I'm sorry to report that there's trouble brewing in the woods of Lanark-Carleton and across Ontario. You see, MPAC has changed the way it assesses syrup operations in Ontario. This has cast a dark cloud over the industry. MPAC says that because maple syrup producers process sap into syrup on site, this part of their operation should be classified as industrial instead of farm. Many producers have received assessment notices that will dramatically increase the cost of producing maple syrup.

That's why today I'm introducing legislation that will protect our maple syrup producers from these crushing property assessments that are threatening the future of the industry. This bill would stop the change in the assessment classification from farm to industrial. I am pleased to report that this bill is supported by the municipalities across my riding.

Quite frankly, the provincial response to this problem has been totally inadequate. I absolutely refuse to accept any stalling tactics by this government, which has not offered any legislation or regulation to deal with this problem.

Maple syrup producers are a growing part of our economy. I urge all members to support this industry and to support my legislation.

KITCHENER-WATERLOO MAYOR'S DINNER

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): This Saturday night is the 17th annual Kitchener-Waterloo mayor's dinner celebrating the contribution of individuals who have demonstrated long-term and consistent commitment to our community. This year, two individuals involved in the creation of affordable housing will be honoured: Mary Bales and Martin Buhr.

Mary Bales is a volunteer founder of Heartwood Place, a 33-unit complex in downtown Kitchener, and is currently working on developing a second one in Cambridge. I had the pleasure of attending the opening of Heartwood and was greatly impressed by the caring community that Mary and her team have established.

Martin Buhr is the driving force behind Menno Homes, a non-profit housing complex established by the efforts of our local Mennonite community. Martin is also a former executive director of the House of Friendship, an outstanding community organization that works with the homeless and less fortunate in our area.

Adequate housing is the cornerstone of any attempt to address the plight of the most vulnerable in our society. I congratulate Mary Bales and Martin Buhr.

BEACHES CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It is my privilege today to inform this House of the elevation of the newest Beaches citizen of the year. This institution is now in its third year in our community, and the recipient

is chosen from among a list of nominees put forward by the community itself.

All of those nominated are of course excellent citizens. This year, in fact, among those who were nominated were former MPP and now head of the United Way, Frances Lankin. But by unanimous choice of those who were in judgment this year, there was one person who stood out above all the rest, and that was Ted Randall.

Mr Randall is known in our community for a number of things. First of all, he has been a very successful entrepreneur within the community and has had a long-time store in the Beaches community called Randall's Stationery. But that is not why he is famous. In fact, why he is famous even for those who have never been inside the store is that he has done so much for our community: 40 years in the Beaches Lions; he has sponsored neighbourhood sports teams. The singular fact, though, is that no one can ever remember a time when he refused to help or give service to our community when asked by any community person or group. He always delivered.

Our congratulations to Mr Ted Randall, citizen of the year, and our congratulations to the community that has chosen him.

CENTRAL MANITOULIN PUBLIC SCHOOL FALL FAIR

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I recently had the pleasure of visiting Central Manitoulin Public School as part of the MPP back-to-school program.

On Friday last, I was honoured to attend an assembly at Central Manitoulin Public School in Mindemoya in the heart of Manitoulin Island, where Principal Lori Zahnow presided over a very special gathering. The students and staff were joined by Doreen Witty, Carol Gilmore and Doreen Campbell from the Providence Bay fair and the local agricultural society; by Richard Stephens, the reeve of Central Manitoulin township; and by Norm Blaseg, a superintendent with the Rainbow District School Board.

Mrs Pat Marcotte of the Association of Agricultural Societies was present to recognize the wonderful work the students do each year in hosting their own fall fair. This school's fall fair is an important event for all those in the district of Manitoulin. Mrs Marcotte fondly recalled her own ice cream-making activities with the students at a previous fair.

Principal Zahnow was presented with a plaque recognizing the Central Manitoulin fair as an honorary agricultural fair in the province of Ontario. Principal Zahnow praised the efforts that the parents, the volunteers, the staff and teachers have put into this fair. She particularly acknowledged Mrs Marie Kirk and Mrs Doreen Duncanson for their help and leadership.

All in all, the good people at Central Manitoulin have, through this fall fair, linked our agricultural roots, our agricultural traditions and our agricultural heritage together as an integral part of a balanced education.

We all want to congratulate Central Manitoulin Public School on being recognized for their fall fair.

1340

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I rise today on an issue of concern to the senior citizens in my constituency, as well as the seniors across Ontario. We have read many newspaper articles and heard many news items which have quoted the Premier and the Minister of Health considering changing the Ontario drug benefit program to charge some groups of seniors for prescription drugs.

I've received over 1,000 letters to my office from concerned seniors around my riding requesting in the strongest terms that government not implement this proposal. My riding has the third largest number of seniors in Ontario, who would not be able to pay the costs for their prescription drugs. I do not have to remind the members opposite of the tremendous contribution that seniors in our society have given to this province and our country: Raising families, starting businesses, farming the land and, of course, defending our freedom are but a few of this generation's contributions.

The health care sector is large and complex, and all members would agree that changes to make the system more accessible and accountable are desired. However, to make the changes on the backs of our most vulnerable citizens who, in their advancing years, need the system the most, is not the appropriate course of action. I hope the members opposite take these issues into consideration as they struggle with the real challenges of governing, and I hope that other more workable solutions can be found.

TRANSIT SERVICES

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I'm here to again talk about the great news that the citizens of Toronto heard yesterday from our Premier, Dalton McGuinty. Yesterday, Premier McGuinty announced that our government will be providing the city of Toronto and the TTC with another \$90 million to strengthen and stabilize the transit system in Toronto. This new money includes a \$25-million unconditional grant so we won't have a fare increase next year—no fare increase. This is on top of Tuesday's historic \$1 billion, along with the federal and the municipal government put together. It's great to see all three levels governments working together for a change. The \$90 million is also in addition to a \$126-million investment the province made earlier this year.

I'm proud to be part of a government that believes in public transit. These investments in the TTC will make the city of Toronto stronger, environmentally and economically. What is good for the TTC is also good for the economy of the city and the air of the city. If you have a strong public transit system in the TTC, and you

have a strong public transit system in the GTA, you have a strong heart in Ontario. If you keep the heart of Ontario strong, you have a strong Ontario.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): This session of the Legislature has been characterized by one sorry Liberal excuse after another when it comes to democratic reform. We've seen nothing but affronts to the very democracy that we supposedly come here every day to fight for.

In the two weeks we've been back in session, we've asked over 20 questions of the Premier, asking him to explain how it is he can continue to allow his Minister of Finance to sit in cabinet with a cloud of controversy over his head. We've asked how it is remotely reasonable to have his finance minister appointing the very person who may sit in judgment of him. To date, we have not received one solitary answer.

We've attempted to call witnesses before the standing committee on government agencies to review the appointment of the OSC vice-chair. Liberal committee members were instructed to refuse, and they did. The culmination of the Liberal culture of cover-up came yesterday, as the general government committee met to decide whether to call Mr Sorbara before committee to clear the air once and for all. The six loyal Liberal backbenchers marched in lockstep, admitting they were charged with delivering the government line: a firm no. Mr Leal, Mr Rinaldi, Ms Wynne, Ms Van Bommel, Mr Parsons and Mr Dhillon, you should be hanging your heads in shame. You ran on the platform of democratic renewal. Yesterday, you didn't just break yet another promise, you broke an entire Liberal platform. Shame on you.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ASSESSMENT AMENDMENT ACT (MAPLE SYRUP), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉVALUATION FONCIÈRE (SIROP D'ÉRABLE)

Mr Sterling moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 46, An Act to amend the Assessment Act / Projet de loi 46, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation foncière.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): This bill amends the Assessment Act to allow that maple syrup operations be taxed and assessed as farm operations, rather than as industrial operations as MPAC has interpreted. This bill is necessary, following the finance minister's statement that he was going to alleviate the

problem with regard to these operations. The finance minister or the government has done nothing to pass a regulation or legislation to put into effect the words of the finance minister. This legislation will ensure that, not only this year but forever going forward, maple syrup operations will be taxed as farm property.

SAFEGUARD OUR SENIORS ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES

Mr Hampton moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 47, An Act to protect persons in care from abuse /
Projet de loi 47, Loi de 2004 sur la protection des
personnes âgées.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): As we know, the abuse of elderly persons in homes for the aged and nursing homes is a serious problem. Under this act, a duty is placed on operators of health facilities to protect patients from abuse and on persons who are aware of abuse to report it. The minister is given powers to have reported cases of abuse investigated and to take action to deal with abuse.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'm pleased to inform members about the steps this government is taking to increase energy efficiency and improve conservation efforts in our operations. Once again, the McGuinty government will lead by example. We have made conservation and energy efficiency a priority.

This government made a commitment to reduce its own electricity use by 10% by 2007. That represents some 62 million kilowatt hours a year. Today I'm pleased to confirm we will deliver on that commitment. As my colleague the Minister of Energy has made clear in recent weeks, this government is committed to developing a culture of conservation in Ontario. We all have a role to play in conserving energy. Every action, no matter how small, contributes to the larger goal. It is incumbent on all of us to ensure the government makes prudent use of the resources entrusted to us by the people of Ontario.

The actions I'm outlining today focus on four main areas: first we will engage all of our 62,000 Ontario public servants in a government-wide conservation effort; secondly, we will aggressively conserve energy in our own buildings; thirdly, we will cut back on energy waste in any leased buildings and any leased space; and

finally, we invite the public to help us in attaining our energy-saving goals.

1350

The first part is our campaign with the Ontario public service. Earlier today, the government launched an awareness campaign across the Ontario public service to remind our public servants what they can do to help achieve energy conservation in the workplace. Earlier this year, the government launched the Ontario public service ideas campaign. We asked the people who work on behalf of the people of Ontario how government could be improved. Our employees gave us more than 11,000 suggestions. Of those, 500 were energy-related. I'm pleased to say that we've included some of those ideas in our energy awareness campaign. In fact, launching the awareness campaign was one of the ideas submitted.

Through memos, electronic posters on a Web site—all, I might add, produced internally by our public service—the awareness campaign encourages our employees to limit their use of space heaters and office fans, reduce the use of small appliances, turn off all unnecessary lights and turn off computer monitors at the end of every working day. Creating a conservation culture requires a change in behaviour. It's important for all of us to examine how we consume energy and how we can make changes that contribute to conservation.

The second part of the plan is, this government is showing leadership by reducing the demand for electricity in the buildings we own. We've established new standards for energy and electricity efficiency that will be applied in all our building operations, new constructions and retrofit projects. The government's facility manager, the Ontario Realty Corp, is now applying these standards. We are implementing a number of projects in our buildings to help us achieve our goal of reducing consumption electricity by 10% by 2007 and we are evaluating our options for additional projects.

The biggest single source of electricity consumption in government buildings is lighting. In fact, the average building spends about 37% of its energy on lighting. Effective immediately, staff have been instructed in all our buildings to ensure that only necessary lights are on in government buildings after business hours. Only minimal emergency lights are to be left on for security and safety reasons unless, of course, employees are working into the evening.

For example, in the Macdonald Block, the past practice has been that the lights would go out at 8 o'clock. Employees who worked late could request the lights be left on for another two hours. We've changed that procedure, and they will be one-hour intervals. We're also upgrading our lighting to take advantage of more efficient technology. We are undertaking 24 lighting retrofit projects to install slimmer fluorescent tubes. These tubes are approximately 25% more efficient than the ones we currently use. These 24 lighting retrofit projects are anticipated to reduce our electricity use by 9.6 million kilowatt hours per year. That is 16% of the target that we have set. So that project alone will get us 16% of the way toward our target.

Building automation is also helping us save electricity. We will be adding lighting and mechanical control systems in a number of government buildings. For example, automated lighting controls will be installed in Oshawa and Thunder Bay. The 19 building automation projects we are undertaking are anticipated to save six million kilowatt hours per year. That is another 8% toward that target that we've talked about.

Heating and cooling systems are also large energy consumers. They account for about 31% of the energy we use in a typical government office building. That is why we are improving our heating and cooling system, including pumps, fans and variable speed drives. We anticipate annual electricity savings from 18 heating and cooling projects of about four million kilowatt hours. That is another 6% toward our target.

We will also be moving forward with replacing several of the chillers in government facilities. Chillers cool and circulate the water through our office buildings as part of the air conditioning system. The Ontario government owns and operates a number of aging and inefficient chillers. The chillers in the Queen's Park complex, for example, are 35 years old. It is time for them to be replaced. We will be undertaking the 12 chiller replacement projects over the next few months. We anticipate that will save 4.3 billion kilowatt hours, or 7% toward our target.

The annual energy savings from the measures I've announced today total 24 million kilowatt hours per year. That will get us almost 40% toward the target we've set on behalf of the people of Ontario. In addition, the government, through its real estate arm, the Ontario Realty Corp, has undertaken a major initiative to change master building specifications to promote energy efficiency. The foundation of any good energy plan is to ensure that each building's energy use can be measured and monitored. Monitoring performance will be enhanced by installing sub-meters in major facilities that can identify electrical consumption in real time, enabling building engineers to investigate consumption immediately.

That's the second part of our plan to dramatically reduce the electricity we use in government-owned buildings. The third part is to work on the space the government leases on behalf of the people.

We will work closely with our government landlords to find ways to make energy efficiency work very aggressively. The government has approximately 800 leases with the private sector across the province. The government currently has a requirement outlining procedures and practices related to conservation of energy as part of a standard leasing agreement. This requirement is being enhanced to include the use of energy-efficient lighting in all areas where the government is a tenant. The requirement also calls for reduced energy consumption related to heating and cooling of leased space during work and non-work hours. These leases are being enhanced to encourage landlords to undertake initiatives to conserve energy, use alternative fuels and support clean energy production.

The fourth aspect of our plan is the role of the public. Today I'm inviting the public to play an important role in helping the province conserve energy. My colleague the Minister of Energy will be making announcements in the future regarding our efforts to engage the public on the subject of energy conservation. We will approach this issue like we do all others, recognizing that the best solutions to the challenges we face come from all of us working together.

Earlier today I wrote to all members of the Legislature to provide them with copies of the posters we are distributing to our public service as part of our awareness campaign. As I noted earlier in that letter, we will be reinforcing the conservation message with additional announcements of funding of policy decisions in the months ahead. I've also invited members and their constituents to contribute their suggestions about how we can improve energy conservation. I encourage all members, as I'm sure they will, to look for additional ideas that can save energy.

We know people have suggestions on how the government can do better and conserve more energy and electricity. We would like to hear from them.

This is important: We have established an online suggestion box. I say to the public that may be listening now that it's on the Management Board Secretariat internet site. The address is www.mbs.gov.on.ca. I ask and encourage members of the public, if they see that their government is doing anything to waste electricity, we want to hear from them. I repeat that: www.mbs.gov.on.ca. Let us know. This is a place for suggestions. For example, if someone notices a government building is leaving the lights on night after night, we would like to hear about that. Any and all conservation tips will be gratefully welcomed.

As I said at the outset, these are the first steps on the government's journey to become an energy-efficient public service and a leader in energy conservation. We will be exploring opportunities that make use of innovative new technologies such as fuel cells. We will develop partnerships with other levels of government and organizations with expertise in the use of energy and conservation.

The government will be making additional announcements on energy conservation in the weeks ahead. I look forward to telling you more about how this government is going to deliver on its commitment to reduce our electricity consumption by 10% by 2007.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses.

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): Since the Chair of Management Board is directing people to a Web site, I would note that his press release on the Web site says, "McGuinty government to reduce electricity consumption by 10% by 2007," and talks about electricity consumption in the public sector. So that's dated today. If you go to the Ministry of the Environment Web site and you look at a media backgrounder dated December 20, 2002, almost a full year before you came into office, it says the following: "Energy Conservation In Government Operations: Through conservation initiatives, the govern-

ment" will "reduce electricity consumed in its own operations by 10%." We already announced this. If you go and talk to anyone—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr Wilson: —if the minister actually goes and talks—I just talked to six civil servants, by the way, on the phone, and they're already implementing the 10% reduction. So I have no idea—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'd like to hear the response from the member from Simcoe-Grey. He was very patient in listening to the minister's statement. Proceed.

1400

Mr Wilson: Not only were we cutting electricity consumed in government operations by 10%, but we went a lot further than what the minister said today. We started to purchase power from green power sources and we pledged that 20% of the power used by government operations would come from green power sources. We had an energy self-sufficient government buildings policy in place, which you are re-announcing today.

We went further: We encouraged self-generation and small projects for new energy. We reduced barriers to clean, green generation. We supported green power marketing. We introduced and implemented tax breaks for energy efficiency equipment; Mr Baird did that. A tax rebate for solar energy systems was in place as of December 20, 2002, a full year before you guys got around to even thinking about it. We had retail sales tax rebates for energy-efficient appliances and a gas tax waiver for ethanol, and we started a centre for excellence for alternative energy, a joint project with universities and the government.

This is a non-announcement. You should be ashamed of yourself.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's indeed a pleasure to respond to Mr Phillips today because he is indeed launching an awareness program. In fact, he's just raised the prices; that's the awareness program. In my view, he's using the carrot-and-stick approach, only he's starting with the stick—or is it an electric prod?

Technically, I'd say to you that what you've announced—

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: Mr Bradley is speaking over there.

If you really want the definitive lexicon on this issue, you should consult this book here which Mr Phillips, with all respect, is following, just as we had outlined in recommendations 42 to 60. I'd encourage you to move ahead with it. Clearly, the consumer has to learn to conserve. But I say to you that you've got the cart before the horse because, really, the lights are on over there but no one's home. All the policies you're implementing, in my view, have been thought out by an all-party select committee.

I can tell you right now that consumers are engaged; in fact, I would say to you, Mr Phillips, they're enraged at this. Mr. Duncan should know today that the media are very unkind to his solution. In fact, he has no solution.

The whole idea here—and the cause for alarm—is to take time to educate the consumer. Give the consumer some tools to control the rate and time of rate they're using.

Everyone on this side of the House knows that conservation is part of the solution. If I read the Manley report, one of the major recommendations is to close down 700 University Avenue, the electricity building over there that's on all the time. So there are absolutely practical ideas. I looked at the Ministry of Finance last night. I thought Mr Sorbara wasn't here yesterday, but the Ministry of Finance lights were on all night, as far as I'm concerned.

You have to lead by example, but you have to give the consumers some choice in this whole equation. Quite frankly, as member Wilson has said, this announcement today is a rehash of the policies this government had developed in consultation with an all-party select committee and the generation conservation supply committee. I encourage you to move ahead. There are absolutely no dollars in this. There are a lot of numbers. We are going to hold you accountable and clearly the people of Ontario are going to see if you achieve any of the targets. It's just one more promise that's been broken. I can assure you that we'll be watching to see if you keep the lights on.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): If I were a Liberal today, I would be embarrassed by this announcement, because the reality is that if you go and check the announcement made two years ago by the Conservatives, this is the identical announcement. The only thing Liberals have done is repackage it and put a red ribbon on it. This is exactly what the Conservatives announced two years ago, and each and every one of you should be embarrassed that once again all you're doing is repackaging discredited Conservative policies.

It's worse than that. The minister has made a great huff about replacing coal, but what do we find when we look at who he hired as a consultant to give advice on replacing coal? The same consultant the Conservatives hired.

What we're seeing day after day, week after week, is a government that takes discredited, disgraced Conservative policies and tries to find a way to repackage them and then say, "Oh, this is the new, wonderful Liberal picture for the world."

Yesterday the Minister of Natural Resources tried to give a green announcement about electricity, but do you know what it amounted to? It amounted to this: The Conservatives were prepared to privatize all of the remaining water sites in the province that have the potential to generate hydroelectricity. The Conservatives were prepared to sell off all of the sites on crown land that have the potential to develop wind energy. Do you know what you announced yesterday? That you're going to do exactly that. Any remaining water sites on crown land that have the potential to generate electricity are for sale. Yesterday you announced that all of the good sites on crown land that can develop wind energy are for sale.

Yesterday the IMO said that Ontario faces critical electricity shortages for the next 10 years. I thought what we'd hear today is the government coming forward and

saying, "Look, in California they implemented the 20-20 plan and they reduced the consumption of electricity by 3,600 megawatts, the size of the Darlington nuclear station." That would be an announcement. Didn't hear it. I thought you might look at the Tennessee Valley Authority announcement of the early 1980s where, by introducing a real, across-the-state energy efficiency strategy, they were able to shut down two nuclear reactors. No. What we got today was a repackaging of Conservative pap and nothing more.

Where does the average householder in this province stand when it comes to energy efficiency in this government? On their own. This government says that if you want to have one of the new electricity meters which tells you when the price on the private market drops, you're on your own; go buy it yourself.

This is no strategy. This is a repackaging of another Conservative embarrassment, and shame on Liberals for trying to get away with it.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I hope you don't see this as a prop. I do want to point out to the government that you don't need to go out there and consult again with Ontarians about what you need to do. You already know what you have to do. It's in *Bright Future: Avoiding Blackouts in Ontario*, put out by the David Suzuki Foundation.

A coalition of labour and environmentalists met today here at the media studio and told you that raising rates, which is really what this is all about today—it's a diversion from the real issue of today, and that is, you are breaking your promise and you are raising hydro rates in this province.

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): That's not what the environmentalists say.

Ms Churley: That is certainly what they did say today. The evidence is there. You'd better listen, because this is correct. Only a small percentage of energy is conserved through raising the rates. There are other ways to do it so people actually save money.

One of the things your Minister of Community and Social Services announced the other day, \$2 million to help low-income people, is a drop in the bucket. What you really should be doing is going into those homes, doing an audit and retrofitting them. You should be creating an atmospheric fund like I helped start at the city of Toronto—an energy efficiency office and fund. The greenprint is right here in this booklet. Don't keep on consulting; just do what you know you have to do.

1410

ORAL QUESTIONS

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I have a question to the minister responsible for democratic renewal. In the Liberal Party platform document *Strengthening Our Democracy*, now-Premier McGuinty

claims, "MPPs used to be respected representatives of the people. Now they are bit players, manipulated to do the bidding of the Premier and his unelected advisers."

The same document states, "MPPs should be free to represent your views, not just parrot the views of his or her party." Yesterday, in the general government committee meeting, six of the government backbenchers put the lie to that promise. Clearly the parrot is live and well. They came there like robots, programmed to spew the government line, circle the wagons and continue to keep this sordid Sorbara saga hidden from public view. How do you square your promises to the people of Ontario for democratic renewal, for greater committee powers, with yesterday's shameful and embarrassing conduct by the Liberal general government committee members?

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I thank the member for his question. I think it is refreshing that we have a new-found interest in democratic renewal from the party that brought us the Magna budget. I'd remind the member that when he was in government he had an opportunity to change the standing orders and the rules of this House; that since 1995, the Legislature sat but 78 days per year, or 21% of the time.

Time allocation motions were used by your government, I say to the member, more than any other government in Ontario's history. More than 60% of the bills that were introduced by this government were subjected to guillotine motions.

Public hearings: Fewer than half of the bills introduced by your government received public hearings. I say that for this member to complain about the state of democracy is truly like the rooster preaching abstinence outside of the hen house.

Mr Runciman: It's just more contempt for the members of the Legislature and the public. Back in the early 1980s, when I was a government backbencher in the Davis government and opposed the government's decision to purchase an interest in an oil company, I received a note from an opposition Liberal, now the Minister of Tourism, congratulating me and expressing a wish for more MPPs to stand up for what they believe in. That's clearly a sentiment that hasn't infected the current Liberal front bench.

Yesterday, Mr Leal, the lead trained seal for the government on the general government committee, the member for Peterborough, said that he was "charged with the responsibility to answer questions on the Sorbara issue." How does that comment, a confession that he's following directions, fit with your promise to give committees and backbenchers greater independence and authority? How does that fit in?

Hon Mr Bryant: I say to the member, that the question is being addressed to a government that has a democratic renewal secretary is one large difference between our government and yours. We are going to be—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Bryant: I'm going to. We are in the process, through the parliamentary assistant for democratic renewal, Caroline Di Cocco, of working with the House leaders, working with the Speaker's office, working with members, implementing many of these ideas that we had talked about in opposition to ensure that we make the changes that need to be made. We're going to have to do it consensually; we're going to have to work together. If we entrench ourselves, we're not going to be able to make those changes.

I recognize that this is going to take a little bit of time. We want to do our homework and we want to make sure that we get some consensus. We've made that commitment. We're going to be making those changes so that people do feel that their MPPs are playing the role in this House that they ought to be playing.

Mr Runciman: This is a continuing refusal to answer direct questions. This is the Liberal government's idea of democratic renewal. Have a cabinet minister stay on the job while his activities are under investigation. Have that same cabinet minister participate in the appointment of his potential judge and jury. Stonewall opposition questions and coerce naive rookie backbenchers into participating in a scandalous cover-up.

Is that what you call democratic renewal, or is that turning Ontario into a banana republic, where backbenchers are nobodies, puppets having their strings pulled by Dalton McGuinty? Is this just another in a growing list of Liberal broken promises?

Hon Mr Bryant: Firstly, I sure hope that you are not the poster child for decorum in this House, I say to the member opposite. In all seriousness, if we are going to undertake and do the democratic renewal that we need to do in this House so that we don't have that kind of a speech, much of which, frankly, is not contributing to decorum in this House, then we are going to have to work together on these things.

Your question purports to be about democratic renewal. I'm surprised, and I guess I'm a little refreshed, that your party is interested in this subject. The truth is you're trying to use democratic renewal, which is something that we have committed to, we've moved forward on, we've established and we're making changes on, to try and address an issue that has already come and gone. You're trying to talk about something the Integrity Commissioner has already ruled upon. I have to tell you that if I were in opposition and I received the kind of letter from the Integrity Commissioner that you have received and that you saw the Integrity Commissioner cleared—in fact, all of these outrageous allegations you're making in this House today—I would have thought you would have moved on to the issues that in fact concern the people of Ontario.

Now, it is a democracy and you get to ask those questions as much as you want. You get to choose your questions. But I've got to say it is just a little too rich to hear from this party anything—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Attorney General. Of course you don't want to hear

speeches and of course you would have hoped that the opposition would just move on on this issue that the *Globe and Mail* referred to today as a cover-up on the part of the Liberal members of the general government committee. What we have now is something that has moved far beyond the issue of a letter that the Premier has from the Integrity Commissioner to actions taken in the general government committee by Liberal backbenchers to block information that even the finance minister was prepared to bring forward.

Minister, as the minister responsible for supposedly a new era of government, why are you sitting by, and why are you condoning this kind of suppression of information?

Hon Mr Bryant: I say to the member opposite that when you were in government you had a chance to do something about changes to standing orders, and you didn't. We, in fact, have made a commitment to make those changes, and we will. We are undertaking an unprecedented approach to democratic renewal, electoral reform, campaign finance reform and parliamentary reform. We're going to clean up this House. We've already started to do that.

I think what the member is asking about is not democratic renewal; he's asking about something else. I respect that; it's his right as a member to ask any question that he wants to. But why don't you stop pretending that this is about democratic renewal and say what you think this question is about. Because I don't think it's about democratic renewal. I cannot believe that the party of the Magna budget is asking any questions about the subject of democratic renewal.

Mr Klees: I really don't care what the Attorney General wants this to be referred to as. Let's call it something else. Let's just call it coming up with the truth about a scandal that is involving the Minister of Finance. Let's just call it allowing members of the general government committee to do the right thing without having the strings pulled by the Premier. Let's just call it having the truth on this matter and allowing the Minister of Finance to do what he committed to do a number of weeks ago, and that is to give the general government committee the truth. Why won't you let him do that?

Hon Mr Bryant: I say to the member opposite, you can't handle the truth. Why exactly will you not accept the word of Mr Justice Coulter Osborne? What have you got against the opinion of Mr Justice Coulter Osborne? What have you got against the opinion of the Integrity Commissioner? Why on earth would you question the judgment of Mr Justice Coulter Osborne, the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario, when what you could be doing, instead of challenging him, is reading this letter?

"Put bluntly, it would have been manifestly wrong for you to involve yourself or your ministry in any aspect of ... it would have been wrong for you to have taken it upon yourself to disclose or to cause the disclosure of the OSC/Royal investigation."

That is the truth. You can't accept the truth.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Mr Bryant: You can't handle the truth, but you just keep on asking these questions.

1420

Mr Klees: I wish the member would allow us to at least have an opportunity to handle the truth. Give us the chance.

I want to refer to some further suppression of information that I'd like the Attorney General to look into. On February 9, we sent an FOI request to Management Board for e-mails on certain accounts in the Premier's office. On March 10, we received notification that the price was going to be \$1,544. On March 15, we sent a cheque to cabinet office as per that request. We sent the cheque.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): You set the price.

Mr Klees: We're not concerned about the price. Listen up. On March 24, MBS said they lost the cheque. On March 31, we sent MBS a cheque in the new amount. On March 31, MBS advises us that it may take until July 9 now to receive this FOI.

The Speaker: Question.

Mr Klees: Isn't it interesting that the House isn't sitting in July? I'd like the minister to look into this suppression of information and report back and ensure that we get this information without any further delay.

Hon Mr Bryant: I understand why the member isn't interested in the price, because you set the price.

Mr Klees: It's not the price, it's getting the information.

The Speaker: Order.

Interjection: They set the process too.

Hon Mr Bryant: You set up the process.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm getting the impression there's a discussion going this way.

Mr Klees: He's not answering the question, Speaker.

The Speaker: Order. I'd like the question to be put through the Speaker and I'd like the answer to be put through the Speaker, and not have a debate going across like this.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. Would the minister respond, please?

Hon Mr Bryant: Secondly, I say to the member opposite that, as you know—

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Through the Speaker.

Hon Mr Bryant: I say to the member opposite, through the Speaker, that you were the government that excluded Hydro One and OPG from freedom-of-information-act disclosure, and as a result of this government letting the sun shine in, the people are now learning—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Could I have a new question, please.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, today

you're trying to make April fools out of all those people in the province who believed your Premier's promise that he would keep the hydro rate cap until 2006, except for hundreds of thousands of people across the province it's no joke, it's very painful. They have trouble paying the rent now. They have trouble paying the hydro bill now. Yet you're increasing hydro rates today by at least 10%, and for many people it's closer to 30%, and then you say to the lowest-income people, "Oh, we'll give you a rebate." The rebate amounts to \$1 for every additional \$20 you're taking out of their pocket.

Minister, what kind of hard-hearted government not only breaks a promise, but then says to the lowest-income people, "Here, we'll give you \$1 back. You should be grateful for that."

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): The provisions of Bill 4 take effect today. Prices will go up for some consumers, small consumers, around 5% to 9%. This government has also implemented a conservation strategy and a pricing plan that we believe will help consumers, through modest changes in their consumption, to reduce the effect on their bill.

What I think every person in Ontario must acknowledge is that if we didn't do this—the cost to the treasury already, under the Tory price freeze, was \$850 million. We had a choice. We could have let that policy continue on, or do something to constructively improve the electricity sector and provide electricity going forward in the future. These are difficult questions, questions this government is going to face. We believe we've provided enough protection. We are going to continue to monitor it. We are sensitive to the needs of everyone in Ontario, but the greatest need people have is reliable, safe, affordable electricity going forward.

Mr Hampton: Minister, you knew before the election that was the cost of the hydro rate cap. It was well known that was the cost of the hydro rate cap, but it didn't stop your Premier from going far and wide in the province and saying, "I promise I am going to keep the hydro rate cap." Now, for seniors living on fixed incomes, for those people who have to exist on ODSP or who have to rely on Ontario Works, or people who have very modest incomes, you are sticking it to them. Then your Minister of Community and Social Services says, "You should be happy that we'll give you \$1 back for every additional \$20 we take out of your pocket." A lot of seniors have homes or apartments that have electric heat. Their bills are going to be going up by over \$250 a year.

Minister, how does it feel? You promised people. You broke your promise and now you're going to stick it to the lowest-paid people in the province. How does it feel, after all the promises you made, that you stick it to the lowest-income people in the province?

Hon Mr Duncan: Governments have to make difficult choices. If we failed to address this question, if we acted and conducted ourselves in the way, for instance, Mr Hampton's government did when he was in office, we would leave our senior citizens and the poorest vul-

nerable. Who does Mr Hampton think pays for the mismanagement of the Tory price cap, the \$850 million? That's money that could create a lot of school spaces, that could create a lot of hospital beds. That involves a tax burden on the poorest.

We are looking and watching what happens as a result of our policy. We believe that with modest changes in conservation—the \$2-million fund my colleague set up is a first step. We will continue to monitor the situation. We've also looked at ways of dealing with billing problems to assist those who are hurt most. It is important that we have a sustainable energy policy going forward to ensure we have adequate, reliable power available for all Ontarians, going forward.

Mr Hampton: Minister, you knew the cost of that rate cap when you voted for it. You knew the cost of that rate cap when you went out across the province, yet you promised it to everyone. Now, as a result of breaking that promise, the lowest-income people in this province are getting hit and they're getting hit hard. If they look down the road, it's going to continue because virtually every announcement you've made on hydroelectricity since you became government involves more privatization.

We know what that means. It means more Eleanor Clitheroe salaries. It means that when you build a new plant you pay private sector borrowing rates. For every \$1 billion it's another \$200 million. We also know that it means all kinds of expense accounts and at least a 15% profit line. What you are announcing today, what you are doing today, is just the first of many rate hikes people will have to pay. Will you admit that, minister? Your energy policy is no different from the Conservative energy policy and it is going to hit the lowest-income people across this province very hard. Admit the truth.

Hon Mr Duncan: The energy policies of the NDP and Conservative governments failed this province. That's why we find ourselves today having to replace 18,000 out of 30,000 megawatts of electricity in Ontario. Prices on electricity have been frozen for 10 years, except for a period of about two months when the Tories subjected the poorest in this province to the spot market. It is important that we, as a province, come to terms with this reality. We must pay to develop new electricity. The plan we've established, this pricing plan that takes effect today is, in our view, the best approach. What we know for certain is that the policies of the last 10 years have been a colossal failure and have left not only the poor and the most vulnerable, but all of us, with a headache in the electricity sector that only Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals are prepared to face up to and fix.

1430

Mr Hampton: I just want to remind this minister that when the Conservatives started taking the province down the road of privatization, what did Dalton McGuinty say? He said, "We believe you've got to go toward deregulation. That's the way to bring this thing to heel. That's the way to introduce real competition." Then he said, "Throughout Ontario's electricity restructuring process, Dalton and the Ontario Liberals have been consistent

supporters of the move to an open electricity market in Ontario."

Let's be clear on something, Minister: Your electricity policy was their electricity policy. You voted for it then, you're implementing it now and it's going to mean higher rates for people across the province, higher rates for small business and higher rates for Ontario industry. Admit it, Minister: What we've seen over the last two weeks is that your energy policy is exactly the same as the Conservative energy policy, except now you put a red ribbon on it.

Hon Mr Duncan: Let me tell you about his energy policy. When they were the government of Ontario, prices went up 40% for the poorest and most vulnerable in this society—40%, the highest in history. Let me tell you something else about their policy. That party's policy in 1992 and 1993 was to cancel every conservation program the old Ontario Hydro had. Had you listened to Dalton McGuinty then, sir, we would have 5,200 more megas a year, resultant from a good policy on conservation.

Just last week we saw Hampton's most recent flip-flop on coal. Before the election, he was going to close down coal—that's our bold leadership over there—and last week he wanted to keep them open, stoking air pollution in this province like we've never seen. He wants to follow the same policies as the Bush administration; that is, relying more and more on coal. We reject you, just like we reject Bush and the Americans on coal—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The member for Durham.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is also to the Minister of Energy. The first thing I'd like to do is congratulate you and your government. I want to congratulate you for setting the world speed record for destroying Ontario's economy and competitiveness. That's the record, that's the accomplishment. In just six short months, you've taken Ontario's leading economy in North America, piece by piece, and torn it down to the very foundation, after we created over one million new jobs.

Minister, you should know that Ontario's small business really does create the jobs. In fact, the record is clear. Right from the beginning of your mandate, you've increased taxes by \$4 billion, and now you're increasing their operational cost of electricity. Yesterday you announced a miserly \$1.73 per year to protect the consumer. What are you going to do to protect the economy and small business in Ontario?

Hon Mr Duncan: The best thing we can do to protect small business and encourage economic development is to have a sustainable electricity policy in this province going forward. Let me remind the member opposite that no new generation came on stream under his government. They did not address—let's talk about Pickering, shall we, and what happened at Pickering. You were supposed to fix it; it's not fixed. It ran over budget and overtime at a cost to small businesses in the rates they pay. They froze the price of electricity at a level that cost this treasury \$850 million. Last night, they tried to block

debate on disclosing salaries at Hydro One and OPG. What a desperate shame that was to watch in this House, to watch that party try to block freedom of information.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Simcoe-Grey on a point of order.

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): The minister keeps referring to “no new energy projects built in the province.” We built the largest energy projects in recent history—

Interjections.

The Speaker: You made some comments there. I would appreciate it if you'd withdraw that.

Mr Wilson: I'll withdraw if I offended the House, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Let me just say this to you. It was so effective when you were speaking through the Speaker, and we got some good dialogue going. Then it went on to cross-shouting again. I would really appreciate it if you'd continue to do that again. I think we would all feel better. Member from Durham.

Mr O'Toole: I appreciate the interruption because the substance of that answer has been refuted by Mr Wilson. In my riding, Sam's Italian Deli is asking me what the minister is doing. This rate increase isn't something like 9%; it's more like \$250 a month. I see nothing in your plan to look after the affairs of business, small business specifically, in this province. In fact, Minister, I would say you're wrecking the engine of Ontario's economy. You're throwing sugar in the gas tank.

What am I supposed to tell my small business people, owners who are being forced to potentially shut down their businesses or indeed lay off people? Your government offers a shameful promise of support. What's your plan to keep the economy of Ontario strong, recognizing the importance of energy as the engine of this economy?

Hon Mr Duncan: First of all, I say to the member opposite that our plan is to undo all the harm they did in the electricity sector over the course of the last four years. The people of Ontario chose change this year. They got change. That party left a broken record on the electricity sector. Everything they promised in 1998 didn't work out. As recently as last night, they tried to keep from the public information that's vital to understanding how the sector will work.

In terms of economic development and growth, the policy of the Tory party was a failure. When they put small consumers and small businesses on the spot market, prices for electricity shot up. They had to basically throw out their own policy. We're replacing that with a system of reliability and stability that we believe will serve the interests—and time will show that we will fix the failure of that member and his government over the entire electricity sector.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): My question is to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet. You announced today that the government is committed to

reducing electricity consumption in its buildings by 10% by 2007. We all know how important energy conservation is—not only the government's commitment to shutting down coal-fired plants by 2007, but how important it is in helping to reduce the amount of emissions that we put in our atmosphere. That being said, how much will this program cost, how much energy will the government save based on our government's belief in results with measurable outcomes?

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I appreciate the member for Peterborough's question. Just in terms of the four-point plan we outlined today, I'd say that the plan obviously was developed internally and all the public service work was done internally. But there is a requirement to make some investments. We have put a huge priority on the projects in our buildings that will conserve energy and electricity. So the capital cost for the four areas I outlined today will be around \$17 million. The major part of that will come from our Ontario Realty Corp capital budget. That \$17-million investment will reduce our annual usage of electricity by 24 million kilowatt hours a year. That is getting us 40% of the way toward our goal. I say to the member for Peterborough, roughly \$17 million allocated on capital investment will save 24 million kilowatt hours.

1440

Mr Leal: Leading by example is crucial. I'm glad to hear that you're taking positive steps to curb our energy consumption. Energy conservation is a topic of concern among my constituents. Indeed, the PA to the Minister of Energy will be in Peterborough tomorrow meeting with Bob Lake, an acknowledged expert on conservation policies throughout Ontario.

Sometimes I wonder why the government office lights are on all night. Can you tell me why that is and, in light of today's announcement, what action are you taking?

Hon Mr Phillips: They shouldn't be on, and it is our goal to have them turned off. Earlier I announced the automated lighting projects which will automatically turn them off, but many buildings don't have that, so we've asked all of our building managers to turn the lights off. If for some reason or another they are not turned off, again, I would ask the public to let us know. Tell us about it. Today I outlined the Web site address: www.mbs.gov.on.ca. Tell us about it. If we are leaving the lights on, we want them off. I'll make the assumption that the lights will be turned off in our government buildings as per our plan.

BEEF PRODUCERS

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to Minister of Agriculture and Food. Ontario's farmers waited patiently for your announcement on how compensation for BSE would be distributed to our cull cow farmers. Those farmers were looking for a direct per cow payment. Imagine the disappointment when they found out that money they were supposed to get is going to the processing industry. Even the federal government had

envisioned farmers would get money per head, and producers were promised an average \$320 per cow.

I know you and your ministry suggested the money per head was insignificant, but that's not what farmers and people were telling me. Farmers had to give away cows while you took your time deciding what to do, and then they found out that there would be no help for them. What are farmers supposed to do now that their money has been given to the industry that has been accused of price gouging those same producers? Is this just another broken Liberal promise?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I thank the member for his question. Perhaps the member should remember what he said in the Tillsonburg News on March 5 of this year, that if we had enough capacity, the border being closed to the US market wouldn't be such a hardship.

Perhaps the honourable member should talk to the individuals within the cattle industry and the dairy industry. When the federal government announced the cull cow program in November 2003, we talked and consulted with the cattle and dairy industry. The leaders of that industry came back to me and said, "Don't just put a small cheque into the farmer's pocket." We need to do something that's going to have a long-term solution. That long-term solution is increasing slaughter capacity in this province.

The industry came to us and we're working with the industry. We're investing \$7 million to help increase new slaughter capacity in this province, and an additional \$3 million is going to be allocated to the Ontario Cattle-men's Association to help market it. Unlike your government, we listened to the agricultural community. The agricultural community came to us, we listened and we delivered.

Mr Hardeman: That's the same answer the farmers that have cull cows heard from the minister when this announcement was made. The headline in my local paper said that is a lot of bull.

Speaking of broken promises, not only do farmers with cull cows not receive fair compensation for production costs they have because of BSE, they're now being asked to absorb higher electricity prices, starting today. Another broken Liberal promise.

In this House you promised to work with the agricultural community on this issue because you said farmers could be part of the solution. What is the solution for these farmers today? It appears your solution will be, "You'll just have to pay the bill, pay the increase." Is this another broken promise to an industry already in crisis, and have you given up on their survival?

Hon Mr Peters: Not at all have we given up on the agricultural community's survival in this province. We've flowed over \$92 million in support to the cattle and dairy industry in this province. We signed the agricultural policy framework in December that is going to put in place the new case program. The Canadian agricultural income stabilization program is going to be there to help farmers get away from the ad hoc programs that

that government continued to introduce. We are going to bring long-term stability to the agricultural community.

As well, my parliamentary assistant, the member for Huron-Bruce, is working with the Minister of Energy and his conservation committee so that we can make sure that agriculture is going to be part of the solution. We know there are great opportunities from biomass methane digestion where agriculture can be part of the solution. We can help create new generation in rural Ontario. That's what we need to do to help stabilize electricity markets. We are not going to continue down the path your government did of putting \$850 million on the backs of the taxpayers. We're going to be there to help people.

HIGHWAY TOLLS

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a question for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. As you know, Speaker, northern Ontario comprises about 90% of the landmass of this province. You would also know that of the issues that are important to northerners, right at the top of the list is our transportation and highway system. Knowing that there has been a lot of idle chatter concerning tolls on Highway 69, my question to the Minister of Northern Development today is, can you assure this House that there will be no tolls on Highway 69?

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I'm very pleased to announce that there will be no tolls on Highway 69. Let me repeat: There will be no tolls on Highway 69. The antics of the opposition over the course of the last week and a half have reminded me of the children's story, when Chicken Little ran around saying, "The sky is falling, the sky is falling." The reality is the sky has never been brighter for northerners. Finally, we have a government that hears the concerns of northerners, listens to the concerns of northerners and acts on the concerns of northerners.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): We seem to have a lot of discussions going across today. Supplementary from the member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr Brown: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is good to know that the Minister of Northern Development's strong advocacy on behalf of northerners is being recognized by all members of the House this afternoon. I would like to ask the Minister of Northern Development, on behalf of my constituents, who have a very deep and abiding interest in transportation issues, if he could explain to me why the decision was made regarding tolls on Highway 69.

Hon Mr Bartolucci: There are several reasons. A few of them are, first, that there is no alternative route, so people have to take Highway 69, and it would be unfair to make that a toll highway. Second, it doesn't make economic sense to toll Highway 69. Third, our government understands what northerners have been saying to the previous government for eight years: that Highway

69 is an economic lifeline for Sudbury and northeastern Ontario.

Let me tell you, I am so proud to say that we as a northern caucus and as northerners have advocated successfully, and I am very proud of the decision made by our government.

1450

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR GENERAL

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Deputy Premier: The Deputy Premier will know that across this province folks have been waiting six months and more to get birth certificates and other critical personal identification information from the Office of the Registrar General. Your government says that service has been improving, but I tell you, the dirty little secret of this government is that in fact service has been getting worse. One of our sources from within the Office of the Registrar General tells us that the backlog is not 71,000, but in fact has now escalated to 90,000 unprocessed documents. People need these documents for any number of critical reasons: for passports, to open bank accounts.

For months you've been promising to clean up the mess but in fact things have gotten worse. Will you admit that the backlog has grown to 90,000, and what are you going to do about it?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): My colleague the minister responsible has put in place a plan that has been approved, that has in fact reduced the backlog of time. We acknowledge there is still a backlog there. It's a long backlog. Every member on this side and the minister are working hard to ensure that we get that backlog down.

It's important to note that we are attempting to deal with this in the context of all the changes that have been required with respect to security. That being said, the time wait, the backlog, has been shortened in terms of the number of days from the time an application comes in to the time it's being processed.

Mr Kormos: I tell you that the number of unprocessed documents, the volume of the backlog, has increased. It's not the 71,000 that the government says it is, it's now up to 90,000.

One of the other interesting things about this process is that the ministry and the office charge a \$15 fee for 48-hour service. It's unfortunate that the Minister of Consumer and Business Services, in charge of this office, is also in charge of consumer protection, because this very ministry is ripping consumers off. When they pay \$15 for 48-hour service, what they get if they're lucky is one-week service—more often than not 10- to 14-day service—yet they're still being charged the 15 bucks.

The problem is that the office is bogged down. Neither the emergency service nor the regular service has undergone improvements. People need these documents. When, oh, when is the government going to get this office under control? When are you going to keep your commitment for 48-hour service, for which you're

charging Ontarians \$15 in addition to the regular fee? You're ripping these people off. Will you consider paying back the money to those who haven't gotten the 48-hour service?

Hon Mr Duncan: This past weekend, 109 ORG staff worked overtime to help. As of March 26, ORG staff were processing regular birth certificates as at November 10, 2003. The Thunder Bay night shift has been expanded from 38 to 69 staff and the second shift is now permanent in the Toronto office. The government acknowledges that this is a challenge; the government has taken steps to address it. We've shortened the waiting period.

This should be a lesson to all of us, like the previous government that just cut without thinking of where they were cutting, and the impact of those cuts: We saw the impacts on our kids and schools, on our health care system. This government's addressing those cuts and this cut specifically. We're reducing the time and we're continuing to work on the problem.

HIGHWAY 404

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. I was pleased to read this week on the front page of the Georgina Advocate, one of my local newspapers, that after a meeting you held with mayors in my riding, Mayor Rob Grossi of Georgina announced that you had committed to him and the other mayors to fund the extension of Highway 404 in my riding from Green Lane to Ravenshoe Road.

Minister, will you confirm in the House today this funding commitment that you made to my local mayors?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I want to thank the member for the question. When I met with the mayors from Georgina, what I committed was to do the environmental assessment so that we can move ahead with the construction of the highway if the EA is done.

Mrs Munro: Minister, the 404 extension is vital to my constituents, and they want to know that your government remains committed to its completion. The PC government finished the environmental assessment on the project. The engineering studies are almost done, and land acquisition will follow. As each of these processes is estimated to take about two years, construction could begin in 2006. Will you commit to maintaining this timeline? When will construction begin?

Hon Mr Takhar: I understand the importance of this highway, and we are absolutely committed to moving ahead with the environmental assessment. As soon as the environmental assessment is complete, we will move ahead with the construction.

SCARBOROUGH HOSPITAL

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The Scarborough Hospital received approval from the

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for its new emergency and critical care centre in May 2002. As you are aware, this hospital was at the epicentre of the recent SARS outbreak. Based on their experiences, they have identified a need for new infection control and isolation capabilities, requiring a reworking of some of the original plans.

After submitting the revised designs and costs to the ministry, there's concern that approval could be delayed to proceed with this essential project. Further delays to this project could jeopardize the Scarborough Hospital's ability to provide the care our community needs, including adding to increasing waiting times. Can the minister ensure that every effort is made to bring forward the required approvals and support for this project as soon as possible?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'd like to thank my honourable friend for the question. I should take the opportunity, and I think everyone would want to join with me, to recognize that the Scarborough Hospital is not just a great hospital every single day, but played an exemplary role during the SARS challenge that our province faced.

The efforts that they are involved in are to enhance the quality of their facility from its standpoint of dealing with infectious disease control, in a similar fashion to what occurred at South Lake hospital in Newmarket. Of course, we recognize that this is in our interests. The ministry is working closely with the hospital, and although we haven't resolved it all, I do know that there's a meeting coming up later in April. I'll certainly put my personal attention to this and work with the member to satisfy the needs of the Scarborough Hospital and the local community.

Mr Duguid: As the minister knows, the Scarborough Hospital is one of the busiest emergencies in all of Canada. In fact, this hospital receives up to one in three of the ambulances in the greater Toronto area. The hospital has become the benchmark for ensuring that city paramedics' wait times are reduced so that our ambulances can be kept on the road and ready to respond.

Will the minister agree to visit the Scarborough Hospital so that he can see firsthand the great work being done here for our community, as well as experience the necessity of proceeding forward as soon as possible with the emergency and critical care centre project?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I've had the opportunity on a couple of occasions to speak with the president and CEO of the hospital and indicated that it's a priority for me to visit. I had the opportunity a few Friday nights ago to spend three hours at St Michael's Hospital emergency ward as someone just watching what was going on. That's in my riding and also a very busy ER. So I'm happy to confirm with the member that I want to get there for a visit and look forward to making sure we get that confirmed.

The reality is that several of our hospitals in the greater Toronto area have enormously active emergency rooms. This is one of them, and it's essential for the full

functioning of our health care system that it works well. I'm pleased to go and visit it with the member.

1500

SAFE DRINKING WATER REGULATIONS

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): My question is to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Minister, you will know that I wrote you and several of your colleagues a letter on March 3, 2004, soliciting your support for rural Ontario's community halls. You haven't responded to my letter yet, even though government officials told Mike Jennings, a reporter at the Stayner Sun, that I'd get a response within a week.

Your party promised, and it's promise 222, to "make water in rural communities safe." Instead, you're making places in my riding like Clearview, Springwater and town of the Blue Mountains make the water safe at their own expense. Clearview township operates six community halls. They estimate it will cost around \$33,000 per hall to make the necessary upgrades required by the Safe Drinking Water Act to help keep the water safe. Springwater expects to spend well over \$25,000, and town of the Blue Mountains is having trouble with the Marsh St community centre.

Will you stand in your place today and promise Mayor John Brown, Mayor Fran Sainsbury and Mayor Ellen Anderson-Noel that you'll foot the bill for these mandatory municipal upgrades?

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I'm quite delighted to reply to the member opposite. In fact, we are undertaking negotiations, as we speak, with the federal government on the rural municipal infrastructure fund. I hope to have some very good news where our government has succeeded where others have failed to work co-operatively with our federal colleagues to come up with a significant fund for infrastructure. You've seen some of the early agreements, whether it's the strategic highways partnership or whether it's some of the Canada strategic infrastructure funds that we use for transit here in the greater Toronto area.

As we're moving forward, we are looking at financing strategies that will improve our drinking water and waste water systems. I can assure all members of this House that this doesn't mean privatizing our water, but it means finding the investment to be able to meet the clean, safe drinking water needs of all Ontarians.

Mr Wilson: I say to the minister that these halls are closing now. The expenditures are being incurred now. The regulation has been in place for a few months requiring them to make these necessary upgrades. My colleagues John Yakabuski, Laurie Scott, Bill Murdoch—several people on this side of the House—have brought this to your attention and to the attention of your government over the last few months. You will hear pretty soon from the Conservative rural caucus and our northern critic about halls, named, that are closing around the province.

This is happening now. We can't wait for you to get in bed with your federal cousins and come up with some rural infrastructure program. Since this House passed my Keep Your Promises Act this morning and since you promised, "We will make water in rural communities safe," promise 222, why don't you just stand in your place and do what other ministers don't do here: Give us a straight answer and say yes, you'll support rural and northern communities and their halls?

Hon Mr Caplan: I must tell you, I find it a bit hard to take a lecture from this member from this government that cut back and downloaded on our rural communities; in fact, on all communities in Ontario. I say quite frankly to the member opposite, the McGuinty government does not need to take a back seat. We have taken aggressive action already to be able to engage the federal government, to be able to find the investments to enable all communities—urban, rural and northern communities—to ensure safe, clean drinking water. This is yet another wonderful legacy so far, in only six months, and there is much more to come. We are working cooperatively with the federal government. That is a strength. That is very positive. We are going to have strategies in place to be able to finance the crumbling infrastructure that you and your government, quite frankly, sir, cut back on, putting all municipalities—rural, northern, and urban—in such a vulnerable position. We are going to succeed where you and your government failed.

PRE-BUDGET TOWN HALL MEETINGS

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): My question is for the Minister of Finance. Having had the opportunity to participate in a number of the regional pre-budget town halls across the province, as well as a number in my own community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, both open to the public and in our local high schools, I am wondering how your ministry is handling the volume of information to ensure that the citizens who participated in these processes will be heard in the upcoming budget.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I appreciate the question from my colleague from Etobicoke-Lakeshore and the notice that she gave me of the question.

I'm delighted just to put a few facts on the record regarding that unprecedented conversation that we engaged in with the people of Ontario. There were 50 sessions held across Ontario. Some 2,500 citizens participated, including, I might note, people like the eminent mayor of Mississauga, who is in the members' gallery.

Applause.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Hon Mr Sorbara: I'm not done.

The Speaker: You took your time with that.

Ms Broten: There were wonderful ideas and suggestions that came to us in the pre-budget town halls across the province and the citizens' dialogues. I wonder

how you're gathering that information to put it through in the upcoming budget.

Hon Mr Sorbara: Mr Speaker, through you to the mayor of Mississauga, you took up all my time in the first response, so I'll have to compact what needs to be said on this very quickly.

I say to my colleague that it's going to be challenging; there were so many voices. But let me put it this way: At the end of each session I chaired—and there were 14 of them—I said to those participating that it is our determination to make sure they hear their voice in the budget when it is presented. That's going to be challenging.

There were three components to the consultations: the conversation that the Premier launched a couple of months ago, my own ministry's pre-budget consultation and, of course, the work of the standing committee. We are determined—we are committed—to make sure that what we heard from the people of Ontario is reflected in the budget we present later in the spring.

TRANSIT SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Yesterday you gave Toronto a modest one-year bailout for public transit. It wasn't the two cents a litre of the gas tax that your Premier promised, but it is better than what the city of Hamilton got, which is nothing.

Hamilton ratepayers face an \$83-million deficit caused by downloading. They can't afford a big property tax hike, and they can't afford to cut public transit. Yet the Premier has turned them down on the two solutions they have suggested. Minister, why are you freezing the people of Hamilton out? Why are they suddenly being told, "No help for you"?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I am actually very proud to talk about our record on public transit. This is the first time in a long time that the provincial government, the federal government and the municipal government have come together to announce \$1.05 billion for Toronto. In addition to that, we announced another \$90 million for Toronto to support their operating needs. This money is not coming from other municipalities. We are committed to moving ahead with our two-cent commitment to help the other municipalities with their transit needs. That, hopefully, will form part of the budget as we move through.

Mr Hampton: The question was, we saw that you didn't give two cents a litre of the gas tax to Toronto, but we also saw that you basically told the city of Hamilton they get nothing. Here is the reality: People in Hamilton are facing a 6% increase in property taxes, they're facing cuts to public transit and they're facing huge fee hikes for the use of arenas and communities centres. What is your answer to Hamilton, or are they just a victim of another broken promise? What's the answer?

Hon Mr Takhar: It looks to me as if the member opposite is busier asking questions than listening. I already said we are absolutely committed to honouring

the two-cent gasoline tax commitment to all municipalities, and we will phase it over a four-year period. I also understand the Premier is meeting with the mayor of the city of Hamilton and will be addressing that issue.

1510

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I just want, of course, to officially recognize the mayor of Mississauga, Hazel McCallion, who is with us today.

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just wondered if anybody had reported that the Saskatchewan NDP government, in its budget, had cut several civil servants.

The Speaker: I know very well that's not a point of order, and the member also knows that.

PETITIONS

TOBACCO TAX

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have a petition entitled "We Reject Tobacco Tax Hikes," signed by farmers from Mount Brydges, Eden, Vienna, Bothwell, Springford and a number of other communities.

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty has stated that he will increase tobacco taxes by \$10 a carton, force store owners to hide cigarette products behind a curtain and create a smoke-free Ontario; and

"Whereas government measures threaten the existence of Ontario's tobacco growing industry; and

"Whereas the Dalton McGuinty government has now announced the first step in a series of tobacco tax increases;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reject tobacco tax hikes, reject a smoke-free Ontario, reject the ban on tobacco displays and provide compensation and support for the continued existence of Ontario's tobacco growing communities."

I sign these petitions on behalf of the communities in my area.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present a petition from Black Creek Leisure Homes, signed by Johanna Grimme and Aubrey and Betty Taylor, among others, which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas during the election campaign the Dalton McGuinty Liberals said they would improve the Ontario

drug benefit program but now are considering delisting drugs and imposing higher user fees; and

"Whereas the Liberal government has increased costs to seniors by taking away the seniors' property tax rebate and increased the price of hydro;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should keep their campaign promise to improve the Ontario drug benefit program and abandon their plan to delist drugs or increase seniors' drug fees."

I sign my signature in support.

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals by no means campaigned on raising the rates associated with the Ontario drug benefit program; and

"Whereas the majority of seniors, many of whom live on fixed incomes, cannot meet the expense of higher costs for essential medication; and

"Whereas seniors in Simcoe-Grey and across Ontario should never have to make the choice between eating and filling a prescription;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To cancel any plans to raise the costs for prescription drugs for our seniors and to embark on making vital medications more affordable for all Ontarians."

I agree with this petition, and I've signed it.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): As you can see, I have a large number of petitions. The Ontario Forestry Opportunities Coalition has sent them to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and they say:

"Whereas the current forest management practices in Ontario do not take into account labour opportunities for residents of Ontario;

"Whereas an important economic tax base is being lost;

"Whereas the government of Ontario does not take into consideration the residents of Ontario or their future by allowing Ontario's timber to be processed out of province;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take immediate action to ban any harvesting of any species of tree for the purpose of transporting or processing outside of the province of Ontario."

I note there are signatures from many parts of northern Ontario, from Cochrane, Timmins, Val Gagné and especially from Tunis.

LANDFILL

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to present a petition. Actually, the member from Simcoe

North has worked tirelessly on this issue and I am supportive of the work he continues to do.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented by Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

On behalf of the member for Simcoe North, I am pleased to support and sign this.

TOBACCO TAX

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition signed by a great number of tobacco producers in my area and in neighbouring ridings. The petition is entitled "We Reject Tobacco Tax Hikes."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty has stated that he will increase tobacco taxes by \$10 a carton, force store owners to hide tobacco products behind a curtain, and create a smoke-free Ontario; and

"Whereas government measures threaten the existence of Ontario's tobacco growing industry; and

"Whereas the Dalton McGuinty government has now announced the first step in a series of tobacco tax increases;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reject tobacco tax hikes, reject a smoke-free Ontario, reject the ban on tobacco displays, and provide compensation and support for the continued existence of Ontario's tobacco growing communities."

I affix my signature to the petition.

LCBO OUTLET

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the LCBO agency store program is intended to revitalize our small towns and villages, and to provide rural" customers "with responsible and convenient access to LCBO services,

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make available to the village of Baxter an LCBO agency store."

I'm very pleased to sign my name to that petition as well. It's a great location.

LANDFILL

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I'm pleased to be here today to support my colleague from Simcoe North and present this petition to the House:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented by Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will

definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I'm pleased to support my colleague from Simcoe North and to affix my signature to this petition.

1520

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of some constituents of my beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, and it says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the community of Yearley, Ontario, within the electoral district of Parry Sound-Muskoka experiences frequent and prolonged power outages; and

"Whereas the power outages have become a health and safety issue to the residents of the community and the students who visit the outdoor education centre;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Energy instruct Hydro One to conduct an investigation of the distribution and feeder lines that serve Yearley and take the necessary steps to ensure reliable energy through ongoing forestry maintenance and required line improvements."

I agree with this petition, and I sign my name.

LANDFILL

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas, as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and nearby water sources."

I've signed this petition. This proposed dump site is near my riding, and I want to congratulate my colleague from Simcoe North for his hard work on this important issue.

LCBO OUTLET

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Again, this is on the agency store program.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the LCBO agency store program is intended to revitalize our small towns and villages, and to provide rural consumers with responsible and convenient access to LCBO services,

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make available to the village of Baxter an LCBO agency store."

I'm very pleased to sign my name to that.

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the LCBO agency store program is intended to revitalize our small towns and villages, and to provide rural consumers with responsible and convenient access to LCBO services,

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make available to the village of Baxter—in my riding—"an LCBO agency store."

I want to thank my colleagues for their help in this endeavour. I've signed this petition, and I thank all those who signed it.

LIABILITY INSURANCE

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition from my constituents of Parry Sound-Muskoka, and it says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas liability insurance is a necessary coverage; and

"Whereas the rising cost of liability insurance is of great concern;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to review liability insurance rates and take steps to ensure reasonable rates now and in the future."

I agree with this, and I'll add my signature.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I thank all the people who have read my petition today.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas, as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented by Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I'm pleased to sign this, Mr Speaker, and I would like to give it to Michael to take down to you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

COMMITMENT TO THE FUTURE OF MEDICARE ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'ENGAGEMENT D'ASSURER L'AVENIR DE L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 31, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 8, An Act to establish the Ontario Health Quality Council, to enact new legislation concerning health service accessibility and repeal the Health Care Accessibility Act, to provide for accountability in the health service sector, and to amend the Health Insurance Act / Projet de loi 8, Loi créant le Conseil ontarien de la qualité des services de santé, édictant une nouvelle loi relative à l'accessibilité aux services de santé et abrogeant la Loi sur l'accessibilité

aux services de santé, prévoyant l'imputabilité du secteur des services de santé et modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I understand the member had completed her speech, so it's questions and comments now.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): When Liberals say that Bill 8 is going to end "buy your way to the front of the line" health care, I know they haven't read the bill. If you look at the election document, the health platform from the Liberals says the following: "The Harris-Eves government opened private, two-tier MRI and CT clinics. These clinics will sell vanity scans alongside public services, giving quicker access to those who can afford to buy their way to the front of the line. We will cancel the Harris-Eves private clinics and replace them with public services. The Romanow commission proved there is no evidence to support expanding private diagnostic services."

I agree. The question is, how come the Liberals haven't shut down the private MRI clinics? I looked to Bill 8 to see where in the bill the government was going to shut down the private MRI clinics. I asked Minister Smitherman in the standing committee on justice and social policy, February 16, 2004, "Where are the provisions in the bill that ban for-profit ... MRI clinics?" The minister said, "Regrettably, they don't exist." No kidding. This government has no intention of shutting down the private, for-profit MRI clinics. The bill does nothing to stop the "buy-your-way-to-the-front-of-the-line" health care in the province.

Secondly, when Liberals try to say that accountability agreements will be negotiated, I know they haven't read the bill. Go to page 27 of the new bill, subsection 21.1(4). It says the following: "The minister shall consider any representations made under subsection (3) before making a decision to issue a compliance directive or an order..." Does that sound like negotiation? No.

Page 28, subsection 22(2), "The health resource provider shall comply with a compliance directive." Does that sound like negotiation? No.

Subsection 26(2), "The health resource provider shall comply with an order issued under subsection (1)." Is that negotiation? No, it's not. The minister continues to have unilateral power under this bill, never mind negotiation.

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I'm pleased to have an opportunity to provide some comments on yesterday's debate, which is being continued today. Both members from the government, the member for Guelph-Wellington and the member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, made excellent presentations and really outlined some of the key aspects of Bill 8. Above and beyond all, the key word in this bill is accountability. This government is committed to an accountable health care system and also a health care system that is not two-tier.

Throughout the past few years, we have continuously heard from people, whether they be local residents or

whether it be certain interest groups, that we do not want a two-tier health care system in Ontario. This is a concern that many people, especially seniors, have raised to me and I'm sure to many other members of this Assembly.

1530

This bill enshrines, once and for all, the fact that the medical and medicare system in Ontario will not be, or will never become, a two-tier system. People were nervous about this in the past and this finally takes care of it. So let's not get lost in the message here. We can talk about other aspects, we can go into other areas, but the bottom line here is we have a bill that is accountable and makes accountable agreements with hospital boards and the minister, and it prevents a two-tier health care system from being created.

I look forward to further debate this afternoon. I hope that members of the opposition are interested in debating this and not doing what they did last night, which was to stall the debate, ring the bells and lose approximately two hours of time with bell-ringing, a very unfortunate tactic which accomplished absolutely nothing. They claim they were a party that got things done. They've now become a party that likes to obstruct things. I hope that will not be case today.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): We will certainly take his words under advisement. Such brilliant Q and A we just heard there.

I'd like to talk a little bit about Bill 8 and what I'm hearing from my hospital boards. In my part of province—I don't know what you pay your hospital boards in the GTA, where you've got your 22 seats and you're making all your promises about the subway and bailing out Mr Miller and everything—but we have a lot of volunteers. They're very professional people; they're people who are dedicated to the hospital.

I can tell you, those citizens are very, very concerned about what can happen to their hospital boards under Bill 8. There's a sense of community, a sense of identity with a hospital board. I can think of Chairman Karen Wilford from my hospital board in Orillia, Soldiers' Memorial Hospital, someone who's dedicated many hours of her life to make sure that hospital—she works for the chief executive officer—runs smoothly. We're very proud of that hospital. I talk to the folks there at the hospital, I talk to the CEOs, I talk to the treasurers, and they're very concerned about Mr Smitherman's bill, what Bill 8 will do. We won't be supporting it because of that, plain and simple.

Primarily, the Ontario hospitals do not like this bill. When we finish this debate—and there's lots of opportunity for debate—I'm looking forward to going back out to debate this again. We need a lot of public hearing on this. Certainly, as soon as this bill—we've finished the debate in the House on second reading. We're expecting this government of democratic renewal—we heard the Attorney General talk about democratic renewal today—back out on the road. We want to see what the citizens of the province are saying. With democratic renewal, I'm sure that Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Health

would love to go out and debate this bill again and hear lots of information from the citizens of the province on Bill 8.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I've got two minutes. I'm here with Michael Prue, the member for Beaches-East York, and Shelley Martel. She, of course, sat through the committee. I was fortunate, or should I say unfortunate, enough to spend some time in that committee with Ms Martel. I was down in Niagara Falls when the committee was down there. It's been a long time. I can't remember ever seeing a bill where there was unanimity amongst the participants, amongst the public attendees—unanimity in opposition. I sat there and sat there—I'm waiting.

Surely the government could conjure up, could scrounge somewhere, could lift a rock and find something to come forward with in front of the committee to praise the bill. Even an impostor, if you will, like somebody's brother-in-law, some campaign manager for a failed Liberal campaign, could come forward. From time to time I've seen the Tories do that. Ringers, they call them. Produce a ringer, have a ringer come forward and endorse the legislation. Not one of the public participants praised the bill. Not one. Not one of the public participants had anything but criticism of the bill.

Ms. Martel worked her buns off to generate amendments, to try to advocate for effective change to the bill, and what does the government produce? Nothing. The government produces nothing. The government has not altered the substance of the bill so as to make the bill anything other than it was at its very inception.

This is bad legislation. Thank goodness this is only second reading, because government members have an opportunity to demonstrate the independence that their Premier tells them they are going to be entitled to, and perhaps should be. I saw Mr Leal demonstrate that independence at the finance committee yesterday, and today when he was questioning somebody in cabinet.

The bill has got to be scrapped. It's finished. It's over.

The Speaker: The member for Guelph-Wellington has two minutes in which to respond.

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I'd like to thank my colleague from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, with whom I shared time last night, and the members from Nickel Belt, Scarborough Southwest, Simcoe North and Niagara Centre, who have commented.

First of all, last night the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh reinforced the importance of this bill, the consultative process that has gone on in terms of improving it, and the importance of the accountability provisions in the bill, which I must emphasize, contrary to what the member from Nickel Belt has said, are negotiated agreements. It is true that after a certain period, if there is an inability to negotiate, there are other mechanisms there to bring the process to a conclusion, but I would point out to you that that is not unusual. All negotiated processes under the Labour Relations Act, for example, have some process where at the end of the negotiations, if they are unsuccessful, they must reach a conclusion.

I want to talk about the volunteers on hospital boards, because I too have volunteers on hospital boards. The volunteers in my community do a wonderful job. Not only do they work on their own hospital boards, but some of the members from those hospital boards actually sit on a county-wide health network that works on joint planning for the hospitals. That work will continue under Bill 8. Those volunteers will continue to do marvellous work.

Finally, I must take issue with the member from Niagara Centre when he says that the amendments have brought no improvements. In fact, I have had a number of constituents in my office who have said thank you—

The Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 8. Having spent a great deal of time in cities right across this province in the hearings relating to this bill, I am pleased to now have this opportunity in the Legislature to call on the minister to withdraw the bill.

As has been said before here, and we just heard from the previous speaker from Niagara Centre, this is an historic event in one respect. That is that in all of the years that I've been in the Legislature, I have yet to see one bill that was so unanimously condemned by every single stakeholders group that came forward. It was as though the government had created this bill to create unity. They should have called it the unity bill, because what it did was unify every stakeholder group in the province against this piece of legislation. It was like the lion sitting down with the lamb, because whether it was doctors, nurses or hospital boards that came forward, or unions representing front-line health care workers, all of them didn't have a good thing to say about this bill.

They came forward with amendments over the course of the hearings, and I show you this because I want to demonstrate the number of amendments that were proposed throughout the course of these hearings by stakeholder groups. These weren't amendments that were put forward by the NDP caucus or the Conservative caucus; these were amendments that were brought forward by stakeholders who obviously did the best they could to bring forward these amendments, hoping beyond hope that the government would listen at least to some of these amendments.

1540

You know what is interesting? For a government that came forward on the election trail and promised to implement democratic reform measures, to make government more transparent, to give a greater role to backbenchers—I see the member from Scarborough Centre, who travelled on this committee and whom I saw cringing with embarrassment on many occasions when stakeholders came forward and condemned this bill that he had been sent out to defend by the Minister of Health. He did a good job. I have to say that he spoke well, but he wasn't convincing because even he wasn't convinced. He felt embarrassed that the Minister of Health would have put something like this out for consultation.

Obviously consultation is an important process. It was our government that started the process of putting bills

out after first reading so that we could get direct input from the public and from stakeholders on specific provisions of a bill, but I can tell you, just because a bill goes out after first reading, that doesn't mean that you don't consult with stakeholders prior to formalizing that bill, constructing that bill and putting into legislation significant measures that affect the health care system of our province.

I recall the first day in committee when the Minister of Health came forward and spent an hour with the committee. He presented the bill, and it was as though he saw it for first time, because when we started questioning him about the intent of the bill and the various flaws that were there, he immediately admitted, even at that initial stage, in that first hour of hearings, that this is a very flawed piece of legislation. So off we went, on the road, and we started to hear from various groups about what these flaws would do to the health care system, and to hear repeatedly from stakeholders that for a bill that was intended to improve health care, it stands to destroy health care as we know it in the province.

I would like to take this opportunity to read to you from a letter that was sent in by York Central Hospital in Richmond Hill, in my riding. It reads, in part, "given the way the bill is drafted, that Bill 8 will have the opposite effect and fundamentally undermine medicare in Ontario."

Interjection.

Mr Klees: I hear carping from the back. Speaker, I would appreciate it if you would ask the member to kindly settle down so that we can get on with legitimate debate in the House.

The letter goes on, "We strongly oppose the way Bill 8 undermines the role of hospital boards by imposing agreements on them without negotiation or their approval. The bill also circumvents the board's responsibility to govern the affairs of its organization. We are deeply concerned"—and this is York Central Hospital in Richmond Hill—"that by undermining local voluntary community governance, our hospital will find it increasingly difficult to recruit community leaders to sit on our board.... We strongly feel that the government needs to act quickly to address these fundamental shortfalls in the bill."

Contrary to what the carping from the backbenches is, this bill, even after all of the revisions that we have now, does not address that fundamental concern. It's still not in the bill. Either the member in the backbench who's doing the carping hasn't read the revised bill or doesn't understand the appeal that is being made by these stakeholders to preserve the integrity of the local boards in our hospitals. Either way, we have a fundamentally flawed piece of legislation before us and it's not in the best interest of the people of Ontario.

No one is saying that the health care system doesn't need improvement—it does. We have an ever-growing population and the pressure on our health care system is horrendous. We are spending more per capita in this province on health care than most western world

jurisdictions, and yet we continue to fall behind the expectations that people have of our health care system.

I want to read a comment made by Southlake Regional Health Centre. This is, again, an excellent hospital in York region, located in Newmarket. In their comments they again point to an area of the legislation that so undermines the authority and ability of the local board to do its job, to represent the health care needs of the community, to ensure that the appropriate policies are put in place, that the appropriate priorities are addressed within that hospital, and to ensure that the catchment area that the hospital serves will in fact have its priority needs addressed. I'd like to read it into the record: "After lengthy discussions with our board members, many individual trustees felt that the main impact of Bill 8, which is the undermining of boards and the possible elimination of voluntary governance in Ontario, would compromise their individual abilities and interests in serving on boards post Bill 8."

The fact of the matter is, we now have in front of us a piece of legislation that members who were representatives on this committee refused to listen to. When we went into clause-by-clause, there was not one single amendment that our caucus presented or the NDP presented that was accepted. What is wrong with that picture? I'll tell you what's wrong with it: As a result of this government's arrogance, we have experienced a process that fundamentally undermines the credibility of every single member of the Legislature who believes they are making, and want to make, a contribution to this.

We had a similar thing happen yesterday with the general government committee of this House, which refused on the direction of the Premier to allow the Minister of Finance to come forward and give evidence relating to a scandal that is sitting in the front benches of this government. Because of that kind of disregard for the political and democratic process on the part of this government, and its arrogance, I am going to move adjournment of debate.

The Speaker: The member for Oak Ridges moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

Those against, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I said the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1550 to 1620.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Would all members who are in favour of the motion please rise and remain standing.

All those opposed to the motion, would you please rise and remain standing.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 5; the nays are 35.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost. The member for Oak Ridges has the floor.

Mr Klees: I'm pleased to resume debate. Let me clarify, for those who are observing these proceedings at home, what's just taken place here. I just did an interview with the CBC, which asked that same question and the reason for that—

Interjections.

Mr Klees: Speaker, I'm going to let you get order here.

The Acting Speaker: Would the members come to order. I can't hear the member from Oak Ridges and he's sitting about eight feet away.

Mr Klees: Thank you, Speaker. I want to make it very clear to people what's just happened here. We were in debate and I made reference to the fact that, with regard to this legislation, as members who were sitting on the committee hearing recommendations from stakeholders for amendments in the course of sitting in the justice committee and in clause-by-clause, not one single amendment put forward by the Conservative caucus was accepted by this committee—not one. I underscored that that is certainly not consistent with what the Liberal Party promised when they were in the election, that there would be democratic reform, that members of the Legislature would, in fact, be given their due authority and responsibility for bringing forward and helping to make legislation better.

I made reference to the fact that yesterday in the House on the general government committee, the same thing took place. When it was proposed that Mr Sorbara be brought forward for testifying, as he had agreed to do, all members of the Liberal caucus who sit on that committee, with one voice, as instructed no doubt by their Premier, voted against having information disclosed to the committee.

I was moved to move adjournment of the debate because we have available to us in opposition only so many levers to get the attention of government. As I just said in an interview now, it is really the last resort we have to draw attention to the arrogance of this government, that it absolutely ignores not only members of the opposition, but strips members of their own caucus of their right to make their own decisions. No doubt the chief government whip cracked that whip, not only in the justice committee, but he cracked it again yesterday in the general government committee, and he has effectively, on the direction of the Premier, undermined the very purpose for which we're here today.

I would like to share my time with a colleague for the remainder of my comments.

Mr Kormos: You do that at the beginning.

Mr Klees: Really? Again I say, isn't it interesting that members opposite are now refusing that request. I would like to test just how democratic this assembly and members of the government caucus are. I will ask for unanimous consent to allow me to split the rest of my time with my colleague the member for Simcoe North.

The Acting Speaker: I say to the member for Oak Ridges, you don't require unanimous consent. At any point during your remarks you can indicate your willing-

ness or your preference to share your time with another member of your caucus.

Mr Klees: Thank you. I will do that. I will share my time with the member for Simcoe North, who will take up the remaining time that is left.

At this point in time, out of frustration for the reasons I've given, I am moving adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour? All opposed?

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be another 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1627 to 1657.

The Acting Speaker: Would all members who are in favour of the motion please rise and remain standing.

Would the members who are opposed to the motion please rise and remain standing.

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 6; the nays are 27.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Mr Klees has the floor.

Mr Klees: In light of the fact that we seem not to be getting the attention of the government on very important issues of the day, I'd like to take the remaining time to make one final appeal to the Minister of Health.

Not one of the amendments we put forward was accepted by the justice committee for inclusion in the bill, so we now have a bill—Speaker, you've seen it. In all the time I've been in this Legislature, I have not seen a bill after second reading that has as many lines through it and as many amendments reflected in it as this one, but none of which reflects the stakeholders who came forward and who still have significant concerns.

Here's my appeal to the Minister of Health: At least allow this bill to go forward for hearings after second reading, now that it has been changed so substantively. That request has been made by all the stakeholders with whom we met in the course of the first round of hearings. I don't think it's unreasonable.

I'd like to hear from members opposite why they think that would be unreasonable. They have two-minute responses available to them now, and I would ask, instead of carping, why not stand in your places now and tell us you will also support this bill, after it passes second reading, because I'm sure from the speeches I've heard that it will. But it certainly is not a bill that the health care providers in this province can live with. That's the message we've heard.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Speaker, I want to refer you to standing order 23(b), which says:

"23 In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she:...

"(b) Directs his or her speech to matters other than:

"(i) the question under discussion, or

"(ii) a motion or amendment he or she intends to move, or

"(iii) a point of order."

The member has not been directing his attention to the appropriate bill. I just wanted to point that out to you, Speaker, and ask you to bring the member to order

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Certainly all members are aware they have to speak to the issue at hand.

I recognize the member for Oak Ridges.

Mr Klees: I know the member was trying to run out the clock, just one more example of the kind of gamesmanship—

Mr Kormos: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I draw the Speaker's attention to the clock. Your attention having been drawn to the clock, you are compelled to follow the clock.

Mr Klees: Or put the time back on that he took up.

The Acting Speaker: It's apparent to me that the minister was attempting to make a point of order. Certainly it eliminated the opportunity for the member for Oak Ridges to conclude his speech, so I was allowing the member for Oak Ridges a few extra seconds to conclude his speech.

Mr Klees: That is very wise, Speaker. I want to thank you for your wisdom. I will wrap up.

As I said, I'm simply challenging the Minister of Health to allow this bill to go for second reading, and for committee hearings once it has passed second reading. That's not too much to ask. I'm asking members opposite in their two minutes to please stand in their place and at least support that part of the political process.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Kormos: Mr Prue from Beaches-East York is going to have some comments of his own in just a couple of minutes.

I've got to tell you, it is sweet, almost, to sit here and watch the Tory opposition members hoist on the petard they constructed during the course of eight and a half years of changing the standing orders.

It is pathetic to have to watch an opposition resorting, as I have many times when the Tories were in power, to 30-minute bell-ringing in a futile effort to draw attention to a grievance. I agonize when I see that being done, just as I agonized over the course of the last eight and a half years when New Democrats had to do it once the Tories changed the rules and effectively shut the door on any meaningful role for opposition members to play in an ongoing debate.

Having set the standard for time allocation and closure motions, be it under the guise of programming motions, the Tories taught the Liberals well. Every draconian, arbitrary and undemocratic practice the Tories engaged in over the course of the last eight years we now see being engaged in by the Liberals. I find that no more pleasant than when it was being done by the Tories, but I take some perverse pleasure in seeing it done to the Tories.

Having said that, I will be using my time, in about eight minutes, to speak to the bill. As I said, Michael Prue, for those folks from Beaches-East York and other fans of Michael Prue, will be making a two-minute comment in about six minutes' time, so I tell those people to please stay tuned.

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): My thanks to the member for Oak Ridges for mentioning me in his speech. It's always nice to be acknowledged. Even though what he said may not have been all that complimentary or accurate, it's nice to be acknowledged nonetheless. I enjoyed, as the member did, the time we spent travelling across the province and listening very carefully to the views of Ontarians and all stakeholders in considering this legislation.

We, on our side of the committee table, noted the discomfort of the member for Oak Ridges and his colleagues as we listened intently and as we brought forward amendments, something his government would never, ever have done. We can understand his discomfort, and in fact the bewilderment of the member, because he's not used to seeing a government that's actually working hard and listening hard to what people are saying. He's used to being part of a government that liked to ram through legislation, using closure at every turn. He's used to being part of a government that would not listen at committee; in fact, would not likely have let bills out for public hearings in the first place. So I understand that he may have been a little bit confused at committee as to the process that was going on.

Frankly, I've got to tell you, I'm proud of the work our members have done at committee. We listened extremely closely to the stakeholders, and we've improved this legislation. We've made it very good legislation. I'm proud of my support on committee. I'm proud to support this legislation.

Unlike the previous government, we're determined to tackle the problems in our health care system. We're determined to reform that health care system from an institution-based system to a system that's more community-based, that's more patient-centred. That's not going to happen easily. It's going to require some accountability in the system, and that is why we're working very hard to make sure this legislation goes through so we can continue our reforms.

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): It's my pleasure to rise in support of the comments of my colleague from Oak Ridges and also to support his absolute frustration at what this government is doing. They campaigned on a promise of democratic renewal, democratic reform and enhanced roles for individual MPPs. They even went so far as to create a cabinet position of minister responsible for democratic renewal. What they've done is insult every Ontarian, because the very first time that was put to the test, they failed miserably.

We as an opposition that feels the people of Ontario must be represented by a strong opposition, feel we have no option than to register our disgust and displeasure at the actions of this government, not only in this House but in the committee yesterday.

On the question of Bill 8, I too have had letters from hospital boards in my constituency of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. I have sat with the board at the Deep River and District Hospital. I have letters from the

Arnprior hospital. They are, at the very least, injured and even insulted by the position of this government that they are simply going to walk over them and ignore these people in their communities—these people who are the heart and soul of their communities. The Minister of Health can simply brush them aside, should he choose to, and enforce his position on the CEO of that hospital.

1710

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I rise actually to compliment the speaker, Mr Klees. I compliment him because he did stick, by and large, to the issue. I'm not going to compliment him particularly for the tactic of ringing the bells, but I do understand why he rang them. I was in that committee yesterday. I witnessed the complete shutdown of the opposition in a very sensible motion that would have taken the whole issue outside of this Legislature—

Interjection.

Mr Prue: Please. I don't interrupt you, and you very seldom have anything to say.

It would have taken them outside of this Legislature and put them in the committee, where they could have been dealt with without everything that's happening here today. Notwithstanding that, what he had to say about the bill itself made eminent sense.

We see in this bill a number of factors which are not going to allow the bill to do what it's supposed to do. The proposal is to promise to stop two-tier hospitals. In fact, there are two real, great flaws—overwhelming flaws—to the bill. The first is the issue of the accountability agreements, and the second is the toothless tiger that is known as the health quality council.

With respect, Mr Klees did talk about those things, and what is happening in a lot of our hospitals, including the hospitals in the Toronto area, is that members of the boards are coming and telling us privately, as members of provincial Parliament, that they are reluctant to continue working for the hospitals. They feel that they are not being appreciated. They also are telling us that it will be impossible to recruit quality members if the minister has such draconian powers. Mr. Klees is correct in addressing that. This government, in pushing through this bill—I'm asking first that they withdraw it, but if they don't, at least hold hearings again to make sure that this is going to do what it's supposed to do for the boards and the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes questions and comments. The member for Oak Ridges has two minutes to reply.

Mr Klees: I want to thank members for their comments. The fact of the matter is that we are, as opposition members, frustrated at the process that is ongoing here. I want to just reassert the appeal on behalf of our caucus that the government would seriously consider now, once this bill has gone through this phase of the reading, that it does go back out for public hearings.

We don't have to take the time to travel the province. I'm not asking for that. I think it's sufficient for us to at least have a day's hearing here in the Legislature that will

give stakeholders an opportunity to come forward, register their concerns with some of the things that are still outstanding that they feel are important to them. I'm not asking this on behalf of my caucus; I'm asking this on behalf of stakeholders who have come forward. I'm sure that members opposite are getting the same kind of appeal.

So yes, they have the majority to be able to do whatever they choose. They can flex their muscles on this, and perhaps in the short term that will prove something to someone. I don't believe, really, that it's in the interest of the government to do that. I don't think it augurs well for their credibility, for their reputation. It certainly doesn't augur well for health care in the province.

So once again, I close my remarks by simply leaving this as an appeal to the Minister of Health, to the government to allow this bill to go forward for hearings so that we can have one final opportunity before it goes to third reading to make the necessary changes that will ensure effective and sustainable health care delivery in our province.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate on Bill 8?

Mr Kormos: I'm going to speak to Bill 8, I suppose, in due course. But before I get there, let me speak for just a moment, because of course folks watching have listened to the bells. I want to express my sympathy to Mr Klees and opposition members, who have been forced to ring bells to draw attention to what is a legitimate grievance. It's very difficult, as opposition members, when the government uses the heavy hand of its majority to control committees, and when the government whips its members. I guess I understand the process as much as anybody. I suppose, at the end of the day, you've got to have whipping. Mr Levac would probably agree with me. He's the government whip.

But I do feel sympathy; I understand the frustration of the Conservatives. For instance, it would have been so nice had a member of that committee—because, as it was, Ms Churley brought that very rational and reasoned motion, which of course the Liberals, with their majority on the committee, scuttled. It would have been so nice if the committee had had the power to simply unilaterally, without needing majority support, consider a matter like this.

As a matter of fact, I remember standing order 124, which in its day—it was an order that I used often in my early days here at Queen's Park—allowed any committee member to require that the committee spend up to 10 hours on any issue, investigating it and then reporting back on it, so long as the consideration of that matter did not displace any government business. When a committee member made that application pursuant to standing order 124, the competition was between the committee member and the government House leader, because the government House leader would then start shipping government bills to that committee to displace consideration. But fair enough. That was a contest that was relatively even-handed and you lived with the results of it. There was an element of gamespersonship in it.

So I regret that Ms Churley wasn't able to use that standing order 124. When I listen to the Conservatives, like the member for Oak Ridges, express his frustration, I tell him that I suspect he regrets not being able to use standing order 124 to bring a matter before a committee, as a right as a member of that standing committee, for consideration by the committee of up to 10 hours.

Having said that, I want to remind the member for Oak Ridges that it was he and his party that changed standing order 124. You see, I remember debates around standing orders going back a long time now. I remember my admonitions to government members from the very first rule changes: "Be careful what you wish for." I even recall cautioning some members of the government that I was a member of, cautioning them to be careful what they wished for.

Well, I say to the Tories, you not only wished for but got substantial rule changes, and don't expect this government to all of a sudden—notwithstanding the Attorney General's schmoozing of the press gallery with talk of democratic renewal and reform—revert to the old standing order 124. I say to the Conservatives, you wanted to crush the opposition with, amongst other things, the significant alteration that you did to standing order 124. Well, guess who you ended up crushing? Because you are the opposition. You thought you were oh so clever, you were oh so smug, oh so arrogant, oh so cocky, oh so disdainful of the opposition—all characteristics that I witness currently amongst this majority government. Perhaps it is a quality or a characteristic—not a quality, certainly, but a characteristic—of majority governments. The Tories thought they were just sharp as tacks. By goodness, they were going to show the opposition there would be no messing around with the Tories, not when the Tories are in power.

There were members of the opposition who cautioned the Conservatives that governments don't last forever. In fact, the more recent history of provincial legislatures is that governments are more likely to be defeated than they are to be re-elected. Well, take a look. I'm not saying that we've seen it long enough to witness a trend, but it's certainly been the phenomena over the course of elections. Think about it: Governments are more likely to be defeated than to be re-elected, just as MPPs—I think Mr Prue has made this observation a number of times—are more likely to be defeated than they are to be re-elected. Those are just the probabilities that high-priced statisticians and people like that will tell you.

So I say to the Tories—what is the saying?—you reap what you sow. Well, you sowed some pretty nasty business in this Legislature over the course of eight and a half years. You did. You spat on democracy. You trampled the rights, freedoms and abilities of opposition members. You did. You set a new standard, and now, regrettably, this new government told people that folks were voting for change and they're getting more of the same. Now you've got a new majority government that has no qualms whatsoever about taking advantage of your disdain for this Parliament and its traditions, your disdain for the opposition, making that disdain your own.

1720

New Democrats are voting against Bill 8. The committee process did not serve the bill well. There is no substantial support for the bill. As a matter of fact, as I indicated earlier, it's been a long time, if ever, since I've seen committee hearings around a bill where a government couldn't even come up with somebody's brother-in-law, not even with an impostor. It couldn't hire some Ryerson student to show up and say they supported the bill. There'd be a point at which I would have understood the government getting some young actor, a union actor, I would hope—whatever the base wage is; a couple of hundred bucks—and say, "Please, just go in there for five minutes and say you support the bill." I'm not sure how ethical it would have been, but heck, I've been around here long enough and witnessed enough of majority governments to understand that. What did Mark Twain say about an ethical man? Mark Twain made the observation that an ethical man is a Christian holding four aces. I don't see anybody over on the government side playing cards. There are a few Christians over there, I'm sure, but I don't see any of them playing cards, never mind holding four aces.

If you really want to talk about improving our health care system, I say that this government, any government, should start talking about directly electing hospital boards. The largest single expenditure of taxpayers' dollars is the health budget. In any given community it's the largest single expenditure of taxpayers' dollars. Yet hospital boards are chosen in dark backrooms, inevitably by little cliques, traditionally of men, perhaps changing somewhat now, when in fact you would find that regretful if that's how city councils were chosen or if that's how boards of education were chosen or any other public governance body.

I presented a bill in the last Legislature, Bill 114, An Act to provide for the election of members of the board of trustees of the Niagara Health System. However naïve I am of me—I apologize in advance—I believe in democracy. I believe that directly elected representatives who are accountable to their electorate can do an exemplary job, and that's what democracy is all about. When you're spending public dollars on something as important as health care, the introduction of real democracy to hospital governance would be the most effective and meaningful way to import some real, true reform to health care, to the delivery of health care and the expenditure of those health care dollars.

So I continue to be an advocate for directly elected hospital boards. I find our current hospital boards to be no more democratic than the Canadian Senate, and that's a group of unemployed, mostly elderly people, most of whom are incapable of working anywhere else, and the ones who are aren't in the Senate other than for a couple of days a month anyway, just enough to pick up their paycheque. Talk about corporate welfare bums, you've got the Senate welfare bums who should be ashamed of themselves. Find me a senator who will advocate for Senate abolition and I'll find you one I'm a fan of.

If we want real reform in the delivery of health care, let this government adopt my proposition for direct election of hospital boards and, by the way, let's abolish the Senate while we're at it.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr Prue: There are no members of the government who want to comment on such a good speech and no members of the official opposition.

Mr Kormos: They're not here.

Mr Prue: Yes, there is one who wants to comment.

I'm pleased to comment on the speech because I think—

The Acting Speaker: Member for Beaches-East York, would you please take your seat for one second. I think the member is aware it's inappropriate and wrong to mention the absence of any member of the House. Please continue.

Mr Prue: I apologize and withdraw. I was acknowledging the presence of a member of the House. Perhaps I should not have done that. In any event, I've only got a minute left now.

I believe the speech by Mr Kormos was appropriate because it put in a historical context what has happened in this Legislature. This Legislature, of course, will be debating this issue when the appropriate minister reports in the weeks and months ahead on how to democratize this institution and how to make it work better. It works best when all voices are heard and when all members are given an opportunity for meaningful input.

I believe that some input was received around this bill, Bill 8, and that there have been some changes made. To the credit of the present government, this is novel. In my first two years here, almost every recommendation that I saw made in committee or in this House was never acted upon and was rejected without any hearing whatsoever. So this is novel, and I do appreciate that.

But having said that, this is a very flawed bill. It is not a bill that's going to work well. It is a bill that should be withdrawn; it is a bill that should be reworked. Should you choose to rework it, I can think of no better place to start than the suggestion of Mr Kormos. It is time that hospital boards that spend billions of our dollars are democratic.

Mr Dunlop: It's a pleasure to rise again and listen to the comments from the people from the New Democratic Party.

Hon Mr Caplan: What did he say?

Mr Dunlop: I was watching it on TV upstairs. It was very interesting. Oh, yes, I heard all about the democratic renewal and everything like that.

I want to go back to two things. One is the public hearings, and the second thing I want to go back to is the democratic renewal.

We've heard a lot on Bill 8. The member from Oak Ridges mentioned it and I've mentioned it a few times before, but I think it's extremely important that we take advantage of our people here and of the citizens of Ontario and listen to the concerns they have once again after this debate is entered for second reading and we go

to public hearings. I'm sure you'll all agree with that, because the minister responsible for democratic renewal again said that today. He mentioned a few times in the House how important it was for some change here, and that's something we're not hearing a lot of.

I don't know what the Minister of Health's plans are right now, but it's important that we proceed down that path and have a lot more input from all the different stakeholders that are very concerned about this, particularly the stakeholders from our hospital sector, because I'm hearing it continually, day in and day out. We've had a number of letters, and I know there's some controversy around that, but the fact of the matter is that there are some very strong concerns around the role of hospital boards and the fact that volunteers have played a very important role.

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: Of course they haven't supported it. You know full well they haven't supported it, and we look forward to that future debate.

Mr Klees: I'm pleased to participate in the debate. It's always interesting to listen to the member from Niagara Centre. He makes some interesting points regarding the democratic process, and I don't disagree with him. The fact is that rules were changed in this House.

Hon Mr Caplan: By whom?

Mr Klees: By the former government. They were changed. Every government has changed standing rules over the years.

Here's the issue, though: Those rules, as in fact they were changed, allow for the standing committee on general government to bring forward Mr Sorbara for some hearings, Mr Sorbara having agreed to do that. There's nothing wrong with the standing rules. They would, in fact, have allowed this Legislature to do precisely what members of the opposition were calling for. We would have had an opportunity, as was said before, to have Mr Sorbara come forward, as he had volunteered to do and as the members of that committee and the opposition proposed to do. It was the members of the Liberal Party who were directed, no doubt, by their Premier, by their chief government whip, regardless of what they thought personally, to act as one person and shut it down, to suppress information, to ensure that Mr Sorbara did not have even the opportunity to talk about his circumstances and to clarify—I would have thought that Mr Sorbara would have appreciated that opportunity. I would have thought that in the course of a day's hearing he would have appreciated the time to set the record straight. So I suggest that, drunken with power and the opportunity to shut down and suppress information, they have actually done their colleague a great deal of harm.

1730

The Acting Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre has two minutes to reply.

Mr Kormos: I'm drawn back by the member from Oak Ridges into the secondary consideration, and that is the frustration of the opposition. Mr Klees, the member from Oak Ridges, makes a very good point about being

frustrated at not seeing government members willing to do something other than read the script.

What Mr Klees is suggesting is that it's tough to find a person, a member around here with the guts or the gonads—and I use that in the broadest sense, not in a sexist sense; I use gonadal in the broadest sense. Look, they're as scarce here amongst the Liberals as they were amongst the Tories. And those amongst the Tories, who is the person there with the courage of their convictions like Garry Guzzo or Billy Murdoch or Ted Arnott? Did Ted Arnott ever see the inside of a cabinet office? Did Ted Arnott ever find himself on the receiving end of a juicy perk? No. Did Garry Guzzo ever find himself on a junket? Did Garry Guzzo ever find himself graced with a perk and with a padded position, a non-job that provided a few extra dollars? No. Billy Murdoch—well, Billy Murdoch finally got himself a PA position, but if I recall, it was to Chris Stockwell. So that might not have actually counted, because Chris Stockwell didn't have room for Billy Murdoch in his luggage when he went to Paris.

So look, Mr Klees, don't cry to me about not finding Liberal backbenchers with the guts or the gonads to defy their House leader or whip. They were scarce among the Tory caucus as well, and the few that I recall were effectively ostracized and cut loose. I applaud those with that courage and with the commitment that let them do what was right rather than what might have been politically expedient. But, Mr Klees, thou dost protest too much.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Mr Caplan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 55, I rise to provide members the business of the House for next week.

Monday, April 5, 2004: Afternoon session, second reading of Bill 31, health promotion act, day two; evening, second reading of Bill 8, commitment to medicare act, day four.

Tuesday, April 6, 2004: Afternoon, second reading of Bill 27, greenbelt protection act, day two; evening, second reading of Bill 8, commitment to medicare act, day five.

Wednesday, April 7, 2004: Afternoon, throne speech debate; there will be no evening sitting.

Thursday, April 8, 2004: Afternoon, second reading of Bill 42, MPP pay freeze, leadoff; no evening sitting.

COMMITMENT TO THE FUTURE OF MEDICARE ACT, 2003 (continued)

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'ENGAGEMENT D'ASSURER L'AVENIR DE L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ (suite)

The Acting Speaker: Further debate on Bill 8?

Mr Dunlop: It's good to see that the Liberals are wanting to debate this so much. One second they're

criticizing the opposition for calling a motion of adjournment or a motion to end the debate, and the next time they don't even want to debate it themselves. So it's interesting to see this. It's very, very interesting to see this tonight.

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): The artwork is finished, sir.

Mr Dunlop: You may call it the artwork.

Bill 8 is a very interesting piece of legislation. We've had 72 members that I would have thought would want to say a few words on this. It's interesting to note that they want to bring the debate to an end. They had all kinds of time put aside. What's really interesting is that we're seeing a piece of legislation that many of our constituents, the people who work in our hospitals—I've had people from CUPE come to me, people from the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario and particularly from the hospital boards and the administration of the hospitals who are very concerned about the future of this bill.

I have to go back to my hospital boards. I look at the volunteers who make up those boards. I've said this a few times here today. The fact of the matter is they have spent so much time as volunteers in their communities over the years. I believe the legislation or the rules, policies and procedures around hospitals actually allow you to spend up to eight or 10 years on our boards at home. They take the time to really learn the ins and outs of the hospital. They get involved in recruitment of positions and recruitment of different programs within the hospital. It's disappointing when they see that they may be undermined by this piece of legislation.

I'm disappointed in that as well, because these are volunteers. These are the heart of our communities. I know the Minister of Citizenship will probably be bringing out an awards program later on in the year. The fact of the matter is it's all around volunteerism. We have so many opportunities to award our volunteers.

Just last night in this House—it was downstairs—we awarded, I believe, 20-some people with the Order of Ontario, most of it for their accomplishments in the province of Ontario. There are many hundreds of them or the fact that they have spent so much time volunteering in their communities to make their communities better places to live.

We haven't seen that with this bill. It undermines volunteers. It puts the role of the volunteer, the role of the hospital board back in the hands of the Minister of Health. That's disappointing, because I thought we wanted to make these organizations, I thought we wanted to make the hospital boards more sensitive to the communities that raise thousands and thousands of dollars just for small projects.

In my community, I can think of people like the honourable Doug Lewis, the former justice minister for the Canadian government under Brian Mulroney, who single-handedly, with a core group of people under him, raised approximately \$12.5 million for the expansion of our hospital in the riding of Simcoe North, the Orillia

Soldiers' Memorial Hospital. He presented that money to the board for their contribution. Now we're thinking that those types of things will be undermined by the Minister of Health, and that's disappointing.

What's more disappointing is the fact that we're looking at an opportunity for this committee, as there are so many people who want to have a lot more input on this. The former Minister of Transportation, the honourable Frank Klees, the member for Oak Ridges, would actually like to see this move forward. He's not asking for province-wide consultations for committee hearings after Bill 8. What he is looking forward to is to come back here to the House and actually have meaningful debate right here in the Legislature under our committee hearing system. I hope the minister will allow that to happen. I hope the House leader will allow that to proceed. We're looking forward to that type of debate.

Hon Mr Caplan: We've already renewed democracy.

Mr Dunlop: Well, you talk about—I'm hearing the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal talking about his concerns. Your Attorney General talks about democratic renewal, and I don't see anything happening there. I see nothing happening in the fact that he actually wants to do—

Mr Berardinetti: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just draw your attention to page 18 of the standing orders, section 23(b), where it says that the member must direct his or her speech to the matter under consideration. With all due respect, this member across from us is not directing his speech to the matter and issue before us today.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. I know that the member for Simcoe North knows he's got to speak to the bill. I know he's talking about health care in his local hospital. I would suggest that he's speaking to Bill 8.

The member for Simcoe North has the floor.

1740

Mr Dunlop: The fact of the matter is that volunteerism in our hospital is a key area of—

Interjections.

Mr Dunlop: I don't know if you've ever been around a hospital or not. Do you know what the hospital boards do in your area? Do you know what the auxiliary does? It's all about volunteers. It's all about attracting people. I'm sorry if he doesn't know what his hospital boards do, but the fact of the matter is, he has no idea what he's talking about.

Mr Berardinetti: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I apologize for this, but once again, with all due respect, the member is not directing his speech to the matter, which is Bill 8. He's asking about volunteerism and whether or not I myself know anything about hospitals. I think that is beyond the scope of this bill.

The Acting Speaker: In my opinion, the member is speaking to Bill 8 and he's making relevant comments with respect to the governance of hospitals, which is the issue raised by Bill 8.

Member for Simcoe North.

Mr Dunlop: Naturally, if you take volunteerism out of the hospital boards and the auxiliaries, then you destroy the health care system. I'm sorry that you don't agree with volunteers, because obviously you don't or you wouldn't have brought up that ridiculous point of order. It's as simple as that. The bottom line is that volunteers are a very important part. Not only that, but the fact of the matter is that our volunteer board members are the heart of our hospital system.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Member, take your seat. Would the House come to order, please. The member for Scarborough Southwest, I've already ruled that the member is in fact speaking to Bill 8. Have you got another point of order?

Mr Berardinetti: Yes, I do: page 20, number 23(h), where a member "makes allegations against another member." He's making allegations against me. I ask that he withdraw those allegations and I would ask for your ruling on that.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry. I didn't hear the member make any inappropriate allegation, but if the member for Simcoe North would like to withdraw any comment that he's made, he's certainly welcome to do so.

The member for Simcoe North has the floor.

Mr Dunlop: May I have some time put back on the clock for the time he's wasted talking about nothing?

Interjections.

Mr Dunlop: Pardon me? I know that they really don't want to talk about health care and they don't want to talk about volunteerism. They want to try and rush this bill through any way they possibly can. And of course, what they also don't want referred to is the fact that they're taking away the committee hearings after second reading. That's very, very important as far as we're concerned.

There's an opportunity here. They know the number of concerns and amendments that were not made here. There's an opportunity here for much more debate and an opportunity for a lot more committee hearings. Mr Speaker, I think you're probably very much aware of that. I know they want the debate to collapse. That's likely going to happen. I'm very disappointed, with 72 members, that they would actually—all the people who are wanting to be in cabinet here, and they're simply going to move in this direction.

I want to go back for a second to the volunteerism aspect, because I do think that under Bill 8 you're going to gut the volunteerism out of our health care system. This government talks about democratic renewal etc, and in the very heart of it, they are removing that.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Kormos: I've been looking forward to this for at least four minutes.

I say to the whip for the official opposition, you've got 24 members. You've got to have your members here. This is a government tactic. It's like the Tories, who never spoke to bills, thinking that they could exhaust the opposition. Do you remember that? When the Tories

were trying to shut down debate on a bill, what they would do is they wouldn't put up any more speakers. Don't express shock and outrage at what you saw. If anything, express some admiration for your sleazy tactics being replicated by this government. You see, that's what has happened. Is it democratic? No. Is it fair? No. Does it create healthy parliamentary debate? No. Is it impressive to the public? No. Is it, at the end of the day, fundamentally—oh, I can't use the word because it's unparliamentary, but if Diogenes were here with his lamp, he'd leave the room unsatisfied. Yes, it is.

But the fact is, it's a tactic that majority governments use. You used it. There are only seven of us. When you've got 24 members, you've got to get a few people here in reserve. So Tory members who are sitting in their offices, please come down to the chamber. Don't spill anything on the way, but please get down here as quickly as you can. I know it's Thursday afternoon, but here we are—this is called ragging the puck. We've got 12 more minutes to make this work, to take us into a new sessional day. Do you understand, whip for the official opposition? You've got to have your people here. You've got to explain to them, "No, you can't go home early. That's what you're supposed to do on Friday." You've got to be here, because these sons of guns may collapse the debate by not putting anybody up to speak. They may not even put anybody up for the two-minute responses. The Tories have to be here. You're the guys with the big budget. You're the guys who have the numbers. You've got to have folks here.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I just want to make sure the people watching across the province are very clear that the comment made about the member for Scarborough Southwest not appreciating volunteerism really concerns me. I don't think the member across understands the great history of volunteerism in Scarborough—great mayors like Gus Harris, Frank Faubert, Paul Cosgrove, Brian Harris. Scarborough is one of the most active places in the province when it comes to volunteerism. They have some of the hardest-working volunteers. In fact, today we mentioned Scarborough General Hospital, which was hit by SARS. The volunteerism in Scarborough is second to none.

I just want to make darned sure that we, as members of the Legislature, don't leave any doubt in anybody's mind that, as much as Toronto is a huge megalopolis, thanks to the former government, there are still very strong, vibrant communities in Toronto, and Scarborough is one of the most vibrant parts of the so-called—the city of Toronto, I'll call it. I just want to make sure, because I'm sure that if Brian Ashton ever heard us put down the people of Scarborough, he would not be very happy, as the sitting councillor from that area. I just want to make sure unequivocally that we in no way support what the member from Simcoe North has put in our minds. I think he probably didn't understand that the people of Scarborough are very sensitive when you say, of all things, something about volunteerism, when it's probably the home of volunteerism in the GTA.

Mr Klees: I want to compliment my colleague from Simcoe North for his remarks. To the member for Scarborough Southwest, who on two different occasions—really three—interfered with points of order, again, evidence of tactics by the government that add nothing to the debate, that certainly interfered and took some six minutes out of my colleague's time to discuss the issues. I don't think it goes unnoticed by people who are observing these proceedings around the province. I think it just continues to speak to the arrogance of a government that has an agenda that deflects information that people from across the province want to put forward.

I would say that my colleague from Simcoe North was not in any way suggesting that volunteerism is not alive and well in Scarborough. What he was referring to was the member from Scarborough Southwest, who clearly did not understand the bill, because to stand in his place and call a point of order because my colleague was speaking to the issue of volunteerism clearly demonstrates he has no concept of one of the most fundamental aspects of Bill 8. In debate we have said time and again that volunteers are going to bail from the health care system if this bill is passed in its current form. I want to compliment my colleague for the work he's done in understanding and debating the bill.

1750

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments? The member for Beaches-East York.

Hon Mr Caplan: Stand up for Scarborough.

Mr Prue: Yes, I will stand up for the people of Scarborough, having lived there myself for a portion of my life. I want to stand up for Scarborough the same way I did at Metro Hall and at city hall when Scarborough was experiencing some difficulties, and standing up for the late councillor and mayor Frank Faubert when he was trying to defend that great city.

Scarborough is a great place. I also want to say that I don't believe the member from Simcoe meant any umbrage to the people of Scarborough. It is a place that has a long community history, a history that is more than 200 years from the time when the first settlers moved into the area, started to farm it, and to this day it has a huge number of people who volunteer for everything, including their historical board which I still go out to Scarborough Town Centre to see. One ought not to take anything away, but having said that, I believe what the member was trying to say, to be fair to him, was not against the people of Scarborough, but about the importance of volunteers to all of our communities. They're as important in Scarborough as they are in East York, as I'm sure they're important to Simcoe, the west end of the city of Toronto, Niagara Falls or anywhere.

This is what needs to be said: This bill will not do what is necessary to encourage volunteers because it leaves too much power in the hands of the minister to take over the roles and responsibilities of the hospital boards. That's what needs to be addressed in this bill. It's the one lacuna, the one weak spot of the bill that needs to be addressed. I agree with some of the previous

speakers that it needs to be addressed and should be addressed in additional committee hearings once we have finished this stage within the Legislature. They need not be long committee hearings, but they need to be dealt with. We need to protect our volunteers.

Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to draw to your attention that, while the member for Simcoe North was in debate, the member from Scarborough Southwest on three occasions took—I was watching the clock—at least three and a half minutes of the member's time for debate. I suggest to you, regarding the member's privilege to have his say in this House, that had they been legitimate points of order, I wouldn't be raising this point of order. But they clearly weren't—

The Acting Speaker: To the member for Oak Ridges, there were a couple of interruptions and I ruled the member for Simcoe North was in fact speaking to the bill. I'm now pleased to recognize the member for Simcoe North with a reply to the questions and comments.

Mr Klees: On a point of order—

The Acting Speaker: The same point of order?

Mr Klees: Yes, my point was that I felt it was important that the member be given back the three minutes of his time in recognition of that.

The Acting Speaker: I'm not going to add three minutes.

Hon Mr Caplan: Apologize.

Mr Dunlop: First of all, the heckler, the minister of infrastructure over there, maybe will read Hansard on Monday. That will give you an opportunity to see what I said to the people of Scarborough. I'm simply saying he didn't know what he was talking about. No one mentioned one comment, not one thing, about insulting anyone from Scarborough and you know it. You have these idiotic comments over there. The fact of the matter, what I'm talking about, is that Bill 8 undermines the volunteers in the province of Ontario. It's that simple. The volunteers start with the hospital boards. Then it works its way down through the system to all the people who work on the auxiliaries and all the people who do fundraising across our province. It's insulting to those people to take away that power and give it back to the Minister of Health. You're take away volunteers in the province. That's what's happening.

I'm sorry if the member from Scarborough didn't understand what I was saying, but no one insulted anybody as far as volunteerism is concerned. Quite simply, if you go back to Hansard on Monday, maybe you'll take the chance to read it instead of re-announcing announcements that we had made previously under your ministry and under SuperBuild.

Perhaps you can read what actually took place today and see if anybody from Scarborough was actually insulted. I don't think so, because I have no intention of apologizing to this guy for anything I said. That's for sure. You can be sure of that. There's absolutely no way.

Bill 8 undermines volunteerism in the province of Ontario. It's that simple.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Would the members please come to order. We've got approximately three more minutes and then we can adjourn the House. Please come to order and allow the member to conclude his response. I'll give the member a few extra seconds to do so.

Mr Dunlop: I've been interrupted a number of times this afternoon trying to make a few comments here simply because they're trying to kill the clock. They don't want to debate this. They want to push this thing through very quickly. They're so arrogant in the manner in which they're actually determining this.

I appreciate the opportunity this afternoon to say a few words on Bill 8. I appreciate the comments made by my colleague Mr Klees from Oak Ridges.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate on Bill 8.

Mr Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I'm certainly pleased to have the opportunity to continue debate on Bill 8. Obviously all of us on this side of the House know how important the bill is and how important it is that we devote the right amount of time to a very significant bill that will benefit the people of Ontario.

Being a member of city council for 13 years and being right there on the front lines watching what happened in our community in Niagara Falls—I'm sure other members around the table saw the same situation happen in their communities. I think it's important, just for the record, that it be indicated why this bill has come forth, because there are some significant reasons why we're in this situation. I want to touch on those. I can tell you that all of the reasons I'm going to present in fact were reasons and situations we had in our community in Niagara Falls.

First of all, fewer nurses per capita than any other province: That's what we inherited from the previous

government. We were ninth out of 10 provinces for the number of family doctors per capita. I can tell you that in my riding, I think we were the third or fourth highest city with the least number of doctors. It was a very difficult situation. I can tell you on a personal level that my doctor left the profession and it took me and a number of his patients about a year to find a doctor. So I've personally gone through it.

We were eighth out of 10 provinces for health care expenditure per capita. More importantly, and I saw this first hand in my community, there had been no increase in base funding for community mental health since 1992.

I also want to talk about accountability because that's a significant part of this bill. Some of the things that happened with the previous government, the staff reporting to the public on emergency room backlogs in the year 2000 and on, why do you think they stopped reporting? The numbers were so high they didn't want the public to know about it.

They prevented the Provincial Auditor from auditing how health care dollars are spent. Everyone who watched television or received mail from the provincial government—they wasted health care dollars on tax cuts, and specifically on political advertising.

I want to read these into the record. I keep hearing constantly that nobody who attended those committee meetings supported the bill. I had the pleasure of touring Ontario as well. During those meetings there were a number of positive comments. I want to read a couple of them. "We support the overwhelming principles"—

The Acting Speaker: The member for Niagara Falls, would you please take your seat. It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 pm.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Lundi 5 avril 2004



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 5 April 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 5 avril 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

DEATH OF MEMBER FOR HAMILTON EAST

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that as a result of the vacancy of membership in the House for the electoral district of Hamilton East arising from the death of Dominic Agostino Esq, I've issued my warrant to the Chief Election Officer for the issuing of a writ for a by-election.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I rise today to remind the Liberals in this House that they actually made some promises during the election campaign, and when you make a promise you should keep it. They've broken so many promises in just six short months that it's really hard for anyone to keep track of them all.

For example, the Liberals did not stop development on the Oak Ridges moraine. The Liberals raised taxes. The Liberals have indicated they will not balance the budget. The Liberals lifted the cap on hydro rates. The Liberals lifted the commercial property tax cap. The Liberals did not lower car insurance rates. The Liberals did not roll back toll increases on Highway 407. The Liberals did not honour their de-amalgamation commitment to the city of Kawartha Lakes. The list goes on and on.

I also want to touch on the leadership style, or lack thereof, of the McGuinty government. I like to call it governing by trial balloon. Here's how it works. The government sends a trial balloon up, and if it floats they go with it—pretty simple. The latest trial balloon was testing Ontario drivers, but that balloon was quickly deflated. He wanted to copy Ralph Klein, he thought for a while. Then there were other trial balloons like re-stating photo radar, restricting the drug plan for seniors, and even Highway 69 tolls.

So much for governing by keeping your promises. It becomes clearer and clearer with each passing day of the government's mandate that Dalton McGuinty said whatever he had to say during the campaign to get elected, and decided to deal with the consequences later. I can tell you what the consequences are right now: a short-lived, one-term government.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex):

I am very pleased that the Minister of Education is reviewing the school closing guidelines and the education funding formula that discriminates against small rural schools. I want to remind the minister that many communities across Ontario are anxiously awaiting the outcome of both policy reviews.

Several school boards have designated small rural schools for possible closure because of a one-size-fits-all formula. Their communities would be significantly damaged both economically and socially by these closures. Their students would find it difficult to participate in extracurricular activities or hold part-time jobs.

I also want to remind the minister of the educational value of these small rural schools. A research report authored by Dr Allan Lauzon and Ms Danielle Leahy of the University of Guelph examined school consolidation and the rural community as well as the importance of school size.

In the conclusions of the report are the following statements:

"There is little empirical evidence for cost savings that can be realized through consolidations and closures."

"The alleged savings that can be realized at this point have more to do with rhetoric and ideology than it has to do with empirical realities of what we currently know."

"This is particularly important given the preponderance of evidence supporting that small schools are more effective pedagogically than larger schools."

I urge the minister to consider these conclusions as he develops his new policies.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I rise today on an issue which is important to many of the small businesses in my riding and, indeed, throughout rural Ontario. The issue that I'm referring to is the tax increases placed on rural Ontario businesses by the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. I noted with interest that after much protest from these various small business owners, the Ministry of Finance issued a press release on March 10 backing away from some of the more onerous aspects of these tax increases.

I also noticed that although the Minister of Finance has given trailer park operators and maple syrup producers a reprieve for this year, they are to negotiate with the ministry for the following years. I would like to

take this opportunity to point out that MPAC has had a negative impact on many more small business owners in a variety of sectors. Fruit and vegetable operations, grain and corn dryers, egg hatcheries, golf courses and woodlot owners are just some of the businesses which are having their taxes raised by this government.

You can be assured that our caucus and I will continue to work with small business groups and fight with this government to ensure that you will maintain lower taxes for all hard-working Ontarians.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham): Today I rise to recognize the incredible spirit of Ontario's entrepreneurs, who make our province one of the best places in the world to live and work. For the past few weeks, I've been representing the Honourable Joseph Cordiano at the regional Ontario Global Traders Awards and at the Chinese Canadian Entrepreneurs Awards in Markham.

In my own riding of Markham, the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and thriving. Of the 7,200 businesses, over 85% are small businesses. The growth of my community is directly related to Markham's ability to attract and retain these businesses. One such vehicle for inspiring and encouraging small business growth is the Markham Small Business Enterprise Centre, which provides accurate and timely assistance to aspiring and existing business entrepreneurs.

More unique is the Innovation Synergy Centre in Markham, ISCM, which assists thriving companies in realizing their growth potential in both the domestic and international marketplace. Currently, the ISCM is the only centre in Ontario that is designed to accelerate the development of thriving enterprises with 10 to 50 employees. One of its distinctive features is that it offers competitive intelligence and access to business expertise not generally available to growing enterprises.

By starting their own businesses and by developing their own products and services, Ontario's entrepreneurs are creating economic growth in every sector. There's no question that the success of Ontario's entrepreneurs makes a significant contribution to the high quality of life enjoyed by all residents of Ontario.

SERVICES FOR ABUSED WOMEN

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): This morning I was privileged to sponsor the release of this report, *Walking on Eggshells: Abused Women's Experiences of Ontario's Welfare System*. This is the result of tireless and critically important work. We heard a devastating report this morning that demonstrates, without a doubt, what many of us have known for some time and feared: that the social assistance provisions in the province, put in under the previous government, are simply grossly inadequate and are directly contributing to ongoing violence against women and children.

I was deeply troubled by the report's first-hand experiences of women. I wasn't the only one reduced to tears, hearing some of those stories. What is crystal clear is that the Liberal government needs to do more than just talk. It needs to keep its promises and even go beyond. It needs to walk the walk and commit to properly supporting abused women and their children in this province, and now.

Social assistance benefits have to be increased for these women. Real rent controls have got to be brought in. The Liberals promised to stop the clawback from the federal child benefits. That hasn't happened yet. We need to see the minimum wage raised even more. We need the social housing built that the government promised.

There are all kinds of things the government must move on now to help stop this wave of violence against women and children in this province.

1340

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): In the throne speech, our government committed to change. On February 26, we delivered through our commitment to growing strong communities with \$56 million given to affordable housing development.

In my riding of Mississauga East, which had not seen a single unit built under the previous government and which now faces waiting lists of five to seven years, the news was received with fanfare and pleasure.

The community of Mississauga East, and specifically the seniors from my community and those from Peel Senior Link, would like to thank our government for its commitment to providing seniors with crucial services they need, for on February 26 our government pledged \$1 million to the Twin Pines project. The funding for this growth will bring much-needed aid in the form of 136 units. This will allow for independent living that will open up beds in our hospitals and long-term-care facilities that may otherwise have been occupied by those who could not take advantage of projects such as Twin Pines.

Furthermore, independence to seniors will bring benefits in that they will now be able to receive the dignity and respect they deserve, leading to greater emotional and physical well-being.

We are committed to working together with our municipal and federal partners so as to bring strength to our communities through investment initiatives that will ultimately be beneficial to Ontarians. I'd like to thank Minister Caplan for the pledge to those seniors in need living in Mississauga East and other areas of Ontario.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): It has become increasingly clear that the Minister of Finance, Greg Sorbara, is not just the power behind the throne; he is, for all intents and purposes, the real Premier of Ontario.

How else can we explain his refusal to inform Mr McGuinty for over two months that a company of which he was a director and audit chair responsible for protecting shareholders' interests was under investigation by the Ontario Securities Commission, Revenue Canada and the RCMP?

How else can we explain the fact that Mr McGuinty sees nothing wrong with the Minister of Finance participating in the selection of a new vice-chair for the securities commission, someone who could ultimately sit as his judge and jury?

How else can we explain the fact that Mr McGuinty has removed responsibility from Mr Sorbara for the securities commission, the Toronto Stock Exchange, the Toronto Futures Exchange and the commodity futures exchange?

How else can we explain why six Liberal backbenchers broke the government's promise of openness and accountability at the standing committee on general government? Who were they protecting?

For some time, many people have suspected that Dalton McGuinty was not up to the job, that if elected he would be an empty vessel, a mirage, a figurehead Premier. For members of this assembly and increasingly for the people of Ontario, it is becoming patently obvious just who the real Premier of Ontario is. Stand up, Greg Sorbara.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I listened very carefully to the member who just spoke, and would I refer to our rules of debate, section 23:

"In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she...

"(h) Makes allegations against another member.

"(i) Imputes false or unavowed motives to another member."

Speaker, I think that was an inappropriate use of our time in this House.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I know that your point of order, your quote, is right, but the fact is that what he said was no allegation itself imputing any kind of motive to this individual or false allegations.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): The very first action that Dalton McGuinty took after putting his hand on the Bible and being sworn in as the Premier of Ontario was to increase by 800% the full ministers representing the city of Toronto. He also gave the key posts of Minister of Transportation and Minister of Finance to MPPs who bordered the city of Toronto. Boy, was that a sign of bad things to come.

Dalton McGuinty promised no more special deals for the city of Toronto and he said that he would treat communities like Ottawa and rural Ontario fairly. This is just another example of Dalton McGuinty breaking his promises, Dalton McGuinty not living up to his word.

Let's just look at one area. Let's look at public transit: on November 28, \$64 million for the TTC; on December 23, just about on Christmas Eve, under the cover of darkness when no one was looking, they slipped the Toronto Transit Commission another \$62.4 million; and last week more than \$350 million on one day and a few hundred million dollars the next day. At the same time, the city of Ottawa and its city council are slashing the OC Transpo budget by millions, and more than 1.5 million riders will be on the street next year with the cancellation of several routes. Dalton McGuinty promised to do things differently. Dalton McGuinty is the Premier only of Toronto.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PETROLEUM PRODUCTS PRICE FREEZE ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004

SUR LE GEL DU PRIX

DE CERTAINS PRODUITS PÉTROLIERS

Mr Tascona moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 48, An Act to provide for an interim freeze in the price of certain petroleum products / Projet de loi 48, Loi prévoyant le gel provisoire du prix de certains produits pétroliers.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): The bill's intent is to bring stability to the pricing of gasoline. The bill freezes the price of petroleum products at the price of those products on March 31. The freeze applies from the day the bill comes into force and lasts for 90 days. If the Legislative Assembly is not sitting when the freeze ends, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may by order impose a further freeze for no more than 60 days from the day of making the order.

ADAMS MINE LAKE ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004

SUR LE LAC DE LA MINE ADAMS

Mrs Dombrowsky moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 49, An Act to prevent the disposal of waste at the Adams Mine site and to amend the Environmental Protection Act in respect of the disposal of waste in lakes / Projet de loi 49, Loi visant à empêcher l'élimination de déchets à la mine Adams et à modifier la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement en ce qui concerne l'élimination de déchets dans des lacs.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): The bill prohibits the disposal of waste at the

Adams mine site, an abandoned open pit mine located approximately 10 kilometres southeast of the town of Kirkland Lake. The bill revokes certain environmental approvals that have been issued in connection with the possible disposal of waste at the Adams mine site. It also renders of no force or effect certain agreements that have been entered into with the crown relating to lands described in the bill that are adjacent to the Adams mine site, as well as any letters patent that may be issued in respect of those lands. The bill extinguishes certain causes of action that may exist in respect of the Adams mine site or the adjacent lands. The bill entitles numbered company 1532382 Ontario Inc to compensation from the crown in respect of certain expenses. The bill amends the Environmental Protection Act to prohibit a person from operating a waste disposal site if any part of the site is located in a lake.

MEMBERS' INTEGRITY AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'INTÉGRITÉ DES DÉPUTÉS

Mr Runciman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 50, An Act to amend the Members' Integrity Act, 1994 / Projet de loi 50, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1994 sur l'intégrité des députés.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): This bill seeks to amend the Members' Integrity Act to make it mandatory for cabinet ministers to declare all potential conflicts of interest to the Integrity Commissioner without delay. Essentially, the bill seeks to strengthen requirements to the members of Ontario's executive council to report any and all potential conflicts to the Integrity Commissioner so as to avoid any question of conflict-of-interest charges while serving in cabinet. The bill also seeks to give the Members' Integrity Act precedence over all other acts on issues of conflict of interest and integrity matters.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Monday, April 5, 2004, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, say "aye."

All those against? Did I hear a nay? I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1353 to 1358.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise to be counted.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bountrogianni, Marie
Bradley, James J.
Broten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Chambers, Mary Anne V.
Cordiano, Joseph
Craitor, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Dunlop, Garfield
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Fonseca, Peter
Hardeman, Ernie
Hoy, Pat
Hudak, Tim
Jeffrey, Linda
Kennedy, Gerard
Klees, Frank
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Levac, Dave
Marsales, Judy
Martiniuk, Gerry
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Mossop, Jennifer F.
O'Toole, John
Orazietti, David
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Parsons, Ernie
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Racco, Mario G.
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Runciman, Robert W.
Sandals, Liz
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Sorbara, Greg
Takhar, Harinder S.
Tascona, Joseph N.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wong, Tony C.
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Yakubuski, John
Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those against, please rise.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles
Churley, Marilyn

Hampton, Howard
Kormos, Peter

Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 69; the nays are 6.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WASTE DISPOSAL GESTION DES DÉCHETS

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): The McGuinty government is delivering real, positive change to ensure that communities across Ontario are clean, safe and livable. Ontarians deserve a cleaner environment and cleaner communities that benefit the people who live in them. As part of our commitment to the environment, today I am introducing the Adams Mine Lake Act. If passed, the act would stop the Adams mine landfill proposal once and for all.

The key approvals for this proposal came before the Walkerton tragedy. That sad event raised our awareness of the need to safeguard our precious water resources. The proposed legislation would revoke all existing approvals for the Adams mine landfill and prevent the site from ever being used as a landfill. The endless proposals and challenges around the Adams mine have fo

too long drained the energy and resources of local communities. For too long, it has created divisiveness. The local communities have repeatedly voiced concerns about the Adams mine landfill. For this government, the protection of our communities is of paramount concern. We have promised to address the situation, and today we are keeping that commitment. This is about protecting our environment and respecting our communities.

Today's legislation, if passed, would achieve the following: It would prohibit the disposal of waste at the Adams mine site. It would revoke all existing approvals dealing with the Adams mine site and would void any decision on a permit to take water and nullify any applications for permits under consideration. It would remove the ability of any party to take legal action against the government on these directions. It would outline a plan to provide reasonable compensation for the owner of the Adams mine site. And most notably, most importantly, today's legislation would amend the Environmental Protection Act to disallow the use of any lake larger than one hectare in area as a landfill site. Protection of our precious water resources is a hallmark of the McGuinty government. It would be totally inconsistent and unacceptable, given our priorities, to ever allow garbage to be dumped in a lake.

Today our government announced a new strategy to manage Ontario's waste and reduce the burden on landfills in the province. This far-reaching strategy will help us by setting targets for waste diversion and diversion over the next four years.

Just as importantly, we are addressing the issues within the environmental assessment process that have led to so much uncertainty for so long. Ontario is setting an ambitious new provincial goal: to divert 60% of waste from disposal by 2008. We will release a discussion paper this spring that explores options to divert 60% of waste from landfill, we will look at ways to allow the private sector to do more recycling and we will help industry find new markets that will allow the construction and demolition sectors to recycle their waste. Other issues to be considered in the discussion paper include increasing the diversion of organics and recyclables from disposal, the expansion of central composting facilities and the role of new technologies to help Ontario divert more waste from landfills.

This government is also acting on the need to improve the environmental assessments and approvals process. This is of particular importance for waste management facilities, provincial highways, transit initiatives and clean energy projects. We will set up an expert advisory panel to identify ways to improve the environmental assessment process to provide greater certainty and timeliness while maintaining a very high standard of environmental protection.

Our goal is to increase waste diversion, help find better ways to site landfills and make changes to the environmental assessment process that will give the public more confidence and input to the process. I will announce the membership of the panel soon. As well, we

will enter into a framework agreement with the federal government to coordinate the environmental assessment process for projects that are subject to both provincial and federal jurisdictions. A draft agreement will be posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry very soon, for a 30-day comment period.

Last week, at the Globe 2004 conference, I saw exciting examples of the benefits Ontario's environmental companies can offer as we move forward in this area. We want to work closely with the private sector and municipalities to achieve our goals. The action plan I have announced today is all about ensuring safe, clean, livable communities. Simply put, we are closing the door on uncertainty and moving forward with sustainable and responsible strategies for waste diversion. This is in keeping with our commitment to protect the environment and consistent with initiatives in other jurisdictions. The people of Ontario deserve no less.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): This recent announcement, the so-called Adams Mine Lake Act, is, in my view, a power grab by this government, retroactively eliminating a person's right to legal action. Minister, I quote from your media backgrounder: "Any related legal action that may exist on the day the legislation comes into effect would be extinguished by this legislation." As you have just said, you would revoke all approvals, and there have been years of environmental approvals on this particular iron ore mine—I point out that it's not a lake, it's an iron ore mine.

This certainly does not sound like a government open to democratic renewal, in my view, and it raises questions. How much is this going to cost taxpayers? I did not hear the word "compensation." I don't hear any detailed description of compensation or reparation for this particular action. It raises a number of other questions. Who takes responsibility for the dams that are adjacent to this mine? Will this government take responsibility for the tailings from this mine?

You've announced the Adams Mine Lake Act revoking all existing approvals. I do point out that this is not a lake. This proposal does not refer to landfill in a lake. This is an iron ore mine, an open pit mine in Timiskaming, and does not meet any conventional definition of a lake—again, the heavy hand of government redefining what's a lake and what is not a lake. Minister, if you were to turn around at your recent press conference—

Interjections.

1410

The Speaker: The member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant is trying to respond, and I'm hearing heckling from all sides. Even his own team is heckling. I would appreciate it if we all gave him an opportunity to complete his response.

Mr Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. I would appreciate recouping the time lost.

Again, I do want to make this point: Very simply, this is not a lake. If the minister were to turn around and take a look at the picture behind her in the recent press conference, there was a picture of an iron ore mine. I

guess it raises again the question of the use of language, and it certainly raises questions in a lot of people's minds: Where are the future landfill sites? What happens if we get cut off in Michigan? Does it go to Nepean? Does it go to the Richmond Hill site?

I have raised the issue of compensation. It's irresponsible to not have a cost of compensation, not only for expenditures to date but also the cost of any lost future profits. What about lost jobs and lost economic activity in that part of rural northern Ontario? What kind of a message are you sending to business in the north by changing rules retroactively?

If I have the additional time, I wish to address the other shoe in this. Last fall, I asked the minister about the government's plan to deal with Toronto's trash if Michigan were to cut off the province of Ontario. I did not hear a specific plan at the time; I do not hear one now. Currently, the municipalities in the GTA have no viable long-term contingency plan. We're asking for a plan. We asked for a plan last year.

Last fall, you indicated you were "delighted to stand in this House" and talk about a "commitment to waste diversion.... to divert fully 60% of municipal solid waste ... from landfills." You indicated last fall you had a plan to divert that waste by the year 2005. You were confident you would divert by 2005. Now we hear you're delaying to 2008. How confident are you in your plan?

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): First, let me say that I'm sure the people of Timiskaming, all of those First Nations, the small farmers and others are very happy today about the government's decision, and we applaud that decision. You did the right thing today. It's too bad that this went on for so long and we have to end up paying God knows how much compensation for a project that should never have been given the green light in the first place.

I would say that, on the other part of the announcement today, the announcement on diverting our waste, this is moving in the right direction. I was at the press conference, and I have to examine it more closely, but there are a number of concerns that came up today—there are always some concerns—one of which is that I'm not seeing a whole lot of difference between the previous government's waste diversion plan and yours. For instance, we've got a very big crisis, as we all agree, with waste management, especially here in Toronto but all over the province, with the diversion going to Michigan and the fact that the minister did not announce today an immediate program to stop pop bottles, liquor bottles and wine bottles from going into the waste stream. It's long past due, and I'm surprised the minister didn't announce that today.

The other thing is electronic waste. I have a private member's bill that has been before this House—Bill 29—to take back electronic waste, and I will be asking for unanimous consent to pass this bill later today. Those are the things that we should be doing right away.

I'm also concerned about talking about improving the Environmental Assessment Act. What does that mean? I always get nervous. The previous government so-called

improved it, and it was to the detriment, as you know, of communities. I'm concerned about the fact that there's nothing about intervenor funding, which the previous government also cancelled, so that communities can have meaningful involvement in that.

I have many more things to say about this, but I know that my colleague Gilles Bisson wants to say a few words as well. Perhaps we can have further discussions about this later.

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Président. Je voudrais dire que la victoire n'appartient pas au monde ici mais à ceux dans la région du nord-est de l'Ontario qui ont travaillé si fort pour si longtemps pour assurer qu'on peut finalement mettre fin à ce projet qui, franchement, n'avait ni l'appui du monde du nord-est de l'Ontario ni de celui de Toronto. Cela fait 14 années que le monde du nord-est, Public Concern Timiskaming, et autres ont travaillé pour arrêter ce projet. Cela fait 14 ans qu'on travaille très fort parce que ça n'a jamais fait de bon sens, dès le début. Finalement, je pense que la victoire, il faut le dire, appartient au monde du nord-est de l'Ontario et au monde de la ville de Toronto, qui ont lutté pour si longtemps pour assurer que ce projet est arrêté.

Si on veut revisiter l'histoire : premièrement, le projet a été accordé par le gouvernement Peterson, qui a dit que oui, on pouvait bâtir un dépotoir à la mine de Timiskaming. Le gouvernement de M. Rae a fait une législation telle qu'on a ici aujourd'hui qui a arrêté le processus complètement en rendant illégale la possibilité de mettre en place un tel dépotoir dans le nord de l'Ontario. Finalement, les Conservateurs ont pris le pouvoir en 1995 et ont jeté la loi de M. Rae hors de l'Assemblée, en disant que c'était encore possible. Finalement, la ville de Toronto a voté en majorité d'arrêter le projet, dans le sens qu'eux autres n'étaient pas pour envoyer leurs déchets au nord-est de l'Ontario. Aujourd'hui, le gouvernement libéral fait une virevolte de 180 degrés et accepte la proposition néo-démocratique, et la proposition du nord-est de l'Ontario, que ce n'est pas un bon projet, qu'on a besoin de l'arrêter et que, quand ça vient à l'environnement, cela ne faisait pas de bon sens du tout.

On veut applaudir ceux au gouvernement d'aujourd'hui qui ont pris la décision. On dit que c'est une bonne décision pour le monde du nord-est de l'Ontario aussi bien que pour celui de Toronto.

La deuxième partie de cette affaire-là est de s'assurer, à la fin de la journée, que la deuxième partie de l'annonce fait affaire avec ce qu'on va faire à partir de ce point-ci pour s'assurer que les déchets de la ville de Toronto et d'ailleurs n'ont pas besoin d'aller dans un dépotoir. Cela fait longtemps qu'on aurait dû se pencher sur cette question. Ça fait longtemps que ni le gouvernement provincial ni les gouvernements municipaux, je dois dire jusqu'à un certain point, n'ont voulu être capables de se pencher sur la question : si pas les dépotoirs, quoi? C'est là la vraie question. On va regarder au débat qui va venir et à la législation que la ministre a amenée à l'Assemblée aujourd'hui pour voir ce qu'on pourra faire en comité pour s'assurer que, si on met en

place un tel programme pour divertir des déchets au dépotoir, ça marche et qu'on n'aura jamais besoin de retourner à un projet tel que celui de la mine Adams.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is to my good friend the Acting Premier and Minister of Finance. I want to return to the scandal involving you and Royal Group Technologies, a company under a criminal probe, which is being investigated by the Ontario Securities Commission, a company that is being investigated by the Canada Revenue Agency, a company that you directed for 10 years.

On February 27, the Integrity Commissioner said that you should ensure you are in no way involved with the Canada Revenue Agency on this issue. Can you report to the House specifically what you've done to avoid any involvement?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): It has now been, I guess, right from the day this House came back that the member from Nepean-Carleton has taken up question after question on this issue. I simply say to him that his tactics are his own, but the energy he has used in character assassination and slander is similar and recalls the same kind of attack ads that brought his party down during the last election.

In answer to his question, I'll tell my friend from Nepean-Carleton that I took every step required of me, out of an abundance of caution, to separate myself from the inquiry that is going on with the OSC.

1420

Mr Baird: I'll give this minister some credit. He has certainly got nerve, for the hectoring and lecturing that he gave when he sat on this side of the House to the members of the former government. If there's anything which is linked in the questions on this issue, it's the fact that the minister and his cabinet colleagues have refused day after day to give us some straight answers on what is a very important issue for the people of the province of Ontario.

I want to come back to it because he didn't answer the question. He talked about the OSC. I asked you very specifically what actions you have taken to separate yourself in this issue with involvement with the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency. You're the tax man in Ontario, and the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency is the chief tax collector for the province. How can you have any credibility day in and day out when you're negotiating on a myriad of issues with the federal government on this issue while that very same agency which you have to deal with is investigating a company which you personally directed for 10 years? Can you tell us that, Minister?

Hon Mr Sorbara: Well, once again, the member from Nepean-Carleton has a very quaint relationship with the

truth. I would invite him to look at Hansard from 2001 until the day that this Parliament was dissolved. I suggest to him that he will not see one comment from me as a member of opposition in this Parliament, taking the tactics, using the kind of language and making these kind of spurious allegations that he has been making in this House for the past two weeks.

I will reiterate that from the day the Ontario Securities Commission made its announcement about the investigation that it was carrying on, I took all steps necessary to give the public every single bit of confidence of the appropriate distance between myself as minister and the Ontario Securities Commission.

Mr Baird: Anything can come from the minister's mouth except for an answer to the serious questions that we're raising. I'll concede, perhaps, he was not the one, but he was president of a party that certainly had no inhibition about raising such issues against the previous government. Perhaps he had someone else do his dirty work for him, like the member opposite.

At every moment during this scandal, the government has misused its power to cover up this mess. On March 1 the government used its majority—every Liberal blocked us from reconsidering the appointment of the vice-chair of the Ontario Securities Commission. On March 24, the Liberals once again used their majority, every Liberal voting against a probe into the Ontario Securities Commission. Then once again last week, in a very scripted, partisan manner, every single member of the Liberal party stood lock, stock and barrel in helping cover up this scandal. Minister, if you have nothing to hide, if you have absolutely done nothing wrong, why are you so determined not to answer our questions and why are you so determined to block inquiries on the issue each and every time they're requested?

Hon Mr Sorbara: During the election campaign, that party decided that its only hope of survival was to attack the member for Ottawa South, the now Premier, to attack our party. That style of campaigning was utterly rejected by the people of Ontario. I'll tell you now that this style of questioning and the spurious allegations—

Mr Baird: What about an answer? You don't have the guts to give us the truth.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The language is getting a little bit wild here, and I'm going to ask the member to withdraw your comment.

Mr Baird: I ask with great interest, which comment did I say?

The Speaker: When we speak of a cover-up—and that was the remark—I think it is working toward very unparliamentary language here. I just want you, if you like, to withdraw that comment you made.

Mr Baird: Speaker, if you are asking me whether I'd like to withdraw, I certainly would not.

The Speaker: New question.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, it's been about six months

now since you've been Minister of Finance, since you've been in government. Over that six months, you've attacked seniors. You've cancelled their property tax credit. You've attacked hard-working families retroactively. You've taken away their tax credit for tuition. You have broken promises at breakneck speed.

I'd like to ask you a question regarding your commitment to balance the budget in your platform on page 2. Your platform clearly states, "We will balance the budget...." Then it goes on to make another promise, and that is, "We will make sure the debt goes in one direction only: down." So you made two promises within two pages of your platform: One is that you will balance the budget; second, that you will not add to the provincial debt.

I'm going to ask the minister if he can stand in his place and, anticipating a budget, at least keep this promise to balance the budget when he presents the budget in this House coming up.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I can tell my friend from Oak Ridges that we are delighted to have kept our promise to cancel the private education tax credit and to invest in public education. I can tell my friend that we were delighted to keep our promise to roll back the corporate tax cuts that were going to bankrupt this province. I can tell my friend that we were delighted to keep our promise on auto insurance, to keep our promise on all the measures that we've taken in the short six months that we've been in power.

Our working agenda is to bring forward a balanced budget, but I want to tell my friend from Oak Ridges that the way in which the government that he was a part of abused the fiscal situation of this province will make that work much harder. But we are committed to working on a balanced budget and bringing a balanced budget forward when we bring forward a budget later this month.

Mr Klees: I want to ask the Minister of Finance if at any point in time as the Minister of Finance, in cabinet or in any other meeting, he directed his cabinet colleagues to do program reviews; and if, in order to maintain the integrity of his government and keep his fundamental promise to balance the budget, he ever gave any directions to his ministers through a program review to come in with a balanced budget so that he could stand in this House and do what they said they were going to do, namely, to balance the budget. Did he ever give that instruction?

Hon Mr Sorbara: Well, I think my friend from Oak Ridges knows full well that I am not about to bring to this House discussions that take place within the confines of cabinet.

But I will bring to this House discussions that I've had through hours and hours of pre-budget consultations with the people of Ontario. They said with one voice that the previous government's handling of this province's finances was an abomination. They said the \$5.6-billion deficit that government left this province will be a legacy that our government is going to have to come to grips with, and they are pleased with the work that we're doing.

The final thing that I'll say to my friend is, our working objective is to bring forward a balanced budget. But we will not do that at the risk of vital public services in this province.

Mr Klees: As I was saying earlier, it's been six months since this government took office. In six months, no other government has ever done more to undermine the credibility of government than this government. It doesn't matter where I go, it doesn't matter who I speak to, it doesn't matter which stakeholder it is that we speak to, they have lost confidence in this government to keep its word on any level. I'd like to know from—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. When I ask for order, I'd like the members to respect the Chair and also respect the individual who is speaking. I'm having difficulty, especially with the front row of the government side keeping quiet so we can hear the member.

The member for Oak Ridges.

1430

Mr Klees: I wonder why members of the government are so upset when we ask this very basic, fundamental question. The question is simply this: Why is it that every stakeholder group that was counting on you to do for them what you promised during the election campaign is now at odds with you? You've alienated every one of them. It doesn't matter if it's teachers, it doesn't matter if it's doctors, it doesn't matter if it's hospitals. Not one single promise has been kept. How can the Minister of Finance justify this continuous breaking of promises and the branding he has brought to his government: promise breakers? That's what they'll be known for. That's what they're known for now. That's what the minister is bringing to this government.

Hon Mr Sorbara: Honestly, I can hardly believe my ears. When you talk about energy in this province, and you talk with people who understand that environment, the things that sector says about the previous government and its handling of the energy brief would scorch your ears; social services, the same thing; health care, the same thing; education, the same thing; the environment, the same thing.

I tell my friend from Oak Ridges, I don't need to stand here and review the agenda of your government over its eight years. All I can say is, when it comes to labour, we raised the minimum wage, just as we said we were going to do; in the environment, we hired water inspectors; in the north, we did what we said we were going to do with the Ontario Northland transportation system; and I could go on and on. I just want to tell my friend from Oak Ridges that he is completely misguided in the question he just asked.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social

Services. Two new reports released today say it's time to take action against poverty.

One report says that women are forced to stay in, or return to, abusive relationships because social assistance benefits are so low that they can't survive on their own. It points out that abusive male partners often threaten to make bogus reports of welfare fraud against women, as a means of controlling and intimidating them. The report says that the mean-spirited treatment that women often receive from the Ontario Works offices is another form of abuse. When are you going to increase social assistance benefits so abused women don't have to return to men who beat them?

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I appreciate the question from the member opposite. We had not a happy day in receiving a report called *Walking on Eggshells*, but we have to read this. We are a government that will be responsible to women, so that we can participate in a partnership with these women to get them out of domestic abuse at home. We're intent on doing that in a number of ways.

Today I also had a chance to meet with the group who forwarded this report to us. If we had to ask them what is the single, number one thing we can do, they said it is to raise the rates for those who are on welfare, because economic independence and being able to see some kind of light at the end of the tunnel that they would be able to make it on their own is what they often need to flee, and that's what they need, as well, to stay and not be convinced to go back somehow to an abusing partner. We're committed to doing that. As you know, the McGuinty government won the election on October 2, saying we will do that, and we will.

Mr Hampton: Minister, there was another report, by the United Way of Toronto. It says Toronto now has 120 higher poverty neighbourhoods compared to 30 in 1981. It says the biggest increase is in the suburbs: East York, North York, Scarborough, York, Etobicoke. Minister, these people are becoming poorer, and they asked us to ask you some questions. First, where is the affordable housing you promised? Second, where are the shelter allowances you promised for low-income working families? Third, what happened to your promise to stop the clawback of the national child benefit? Remember those promises? They remember them. What happened to those promises, Minister? Why haven't they seen any action?

Hon Ms Pupatello: As we enter our fifth month as a cabinet around the table and as a government, I can tell you that we have had some historic changes. Probably the signature feature of the last government was the lifetime ban from welfare for fraud. This government fixed that, and we fixed that before Christmas because we knew that in many, many circumstances fraud wasn't even being reported for fear that the penalty was so extremely severe that we just caused more problems for them and for society by going that route.

We are meeting on a regular basis with individuals who are advocates for the poor. We are partnering with

the United Way of Toronto on a number of fronts as well as United Ways across this province to say, "How can the Ontario government finally be a partner to help with solutions, not to assist in causing the problems?" We committed to the people of Ontario that we would have a significant change in the way this government is seen in helping advocate and in helping the poor. We intend to do that and we are committed to it.

DRIVER EXAMINATIONS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Every time Ontarians turn around, your government is hitting them with a new fee, a new charge, a new rate increase: a 30% increase in hydro rates, a 20% increase in auto insurance rates, double-digit increases in property taxes. Now we learn you are considering mandatory driver's licence retesting for Ontario's 8.1 million drivers. Minister, charging each driver a \$100 testing fee comes out to \$810 million. You told the media this is about highway safety. I'm saying, tell the truth. It's a cash grab, isn't it?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I am not sure where this member got this information from. We have absolutely no plan to introduce retesting of drivers.

Mr Hampton: Minister, I think you, like your colleague the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, have realized that this isn't going to fly, that this is a lemon, that the drivers of Ontario are not going to fall for it, that it is a cash grab, that it is unfair, that it is regressive. So I'm going to ask you to say it and say it again: Mandatory driver retesting is not on. It's not on now; it's not on in the future. Say it so the drivers of Ontario can be clear and they won't hear you come back on your word. Say it so people can count on your word.

Hon Mr Takhar: I don't really understand what the member does not understand about "no." I already told him that we have no plans to introduce retesting of the drivers. If he's looking for publicity in the media, this is not the issue to do that on.

1440

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Energy. Your time in the electricity chair is only beginning to warm up. Seniors and others on fixed incomes are angry. Reta Dutly, a vice-president of the board of directors of the Millennium condominium complex in Pickering, many of whom are seniors, presented their MPP, Wayne Arthurs, with a petition. And how did their MPP respond? I quote: "The increased costs are unfortunate, but they are a reality."

Minister, this simply isn't fair. Can you advise the people of Ontario what assistance, if any, you have planned to resolve this crisis that you've created?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): The first thing we've done to help

people with electricity is get rid of that government's energy policy. It's like shooting fish in a barrel. For him to complain—we found out just on Friday that his government gave \$40 million in consultants' fees to a group of consultants that not only didn't live up to the measure, they failed at the measure. We have been left with a huge problem. My colleague Mr Arthurs is quite correct when he says that we had to take action to undo the mess that was caused by his government.

Interjection: Forty million dollars.

Hon Mr Duncan: That's \$40 million at OPG. And let's not forget the consultants at Hydro One: Paul Rhodes, Leslie Noble, and the list goes on and on and on. I suggest that the reason rates are going up isn't because of this government's misguided policies; it's because of that government's inability to manage the most basic of economic files. They left it a mess; we're cleaning it up. Mr. Arthurs is right; he's wrong.

Mr O'Toole: In fairness, that's not an answer for Mrs Dutly and the other seniors of this province. It's clear you're just like the member for Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge: You don't really care about the consequences, not just for Mrs Dutly. The \$40 million you mentioned is what it's going to cost the hospitals of this province. You know the cost could actually increase the number of MRIs. School boards are either going to have to reduce the temperature or increase class sizes. Across all sectors you have no plans, you've acted hastily and you've broken a promise.

The people of Ontario have no confidence in your ability to solve not just the generation, but the whole issue on policy in energy. What faith should the people of Ontario have in you as we look to the next budget? Is your Minister of Finance going to pump in more money to subsidize the price that you had promised—another broken promise?

Hon Mr Duncan: The member's party's energy policy led to no new supply. It did not fix the problems at Pickering. It did not bring on new supply. It did not lower prices. It transferred prices from consumers back to consumers through almost \$1.7 billion gross into taxes. That party's policy hired a group of people for \$40 million at OPG. It saw to it that the former leader of that party got a consulting fee of \$18,000. It saw to it that Paul Rhodes billed \$335,000 for strategic communications advice.

The people of Ontario voted for change—real change. We're giving them real change in the energy sector. I predict that at the end of four years, we will have adequate supply, we will have affordable supply and we will have reliable supply. And one thing I know for certain: There will be no more abuse of the public trough by Tories, like went on under that government for almost eight pitiful years.

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): My question is to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Last Tuesday, an unprecedented allocation of over \$1 billion was announced in a three-way agreement between the federal, provincial and municipal governments, something that the other side never did. The next day, the McGuinty government announced another \$90 million in investment for the TTC. In light of these investments, Mr Minister, can you indicate how these investments will improve the funding for the TTC compared to last year?

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I thank the member for the question. Last week was a landmark in this province's history: the largest ever joint federal-provincial investment in municipal transit in the history of this province. Thanks to this historical investment by the federal, municipal and provincial governments, the TTC will not have any fare hikes and there will be no service cuts. In fact, services will actually increase. But don't take my word for it. I'd like to read from a letter from chief general manager Rick Ducharme of the TTC where he says:

"Last year at this time we were forced to have a fare increase. This year we have no fare increase, no service cuts and money advanced for a ridership growth strategy, therefore, more service. In my books, that's as good as it gets." Rick Ducharme, general manager of the TTC.

I couldn't agree more. It's good news for this province and good news for the capital of our province. Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario government are delivering real, positive change.

Mr Duguid: It's great to have a Premier and a government that finally gets it when it comes to public transit. Over the weekend, I read articles speculating on possible service cuts and service shutdowns in certain areas. Some reported doomsday scenarios of subway closures and routes being shut down. Will this \$1.1-billion investment ensure the TTC will be adequately funded?

Hon Mr Caplan: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I'm very thankful to my colleague from Scarborough Centre. I can understand some of the concerns he had after reading these newspapers. I just want to assure him that the TTC is adequately funded, and I am very proud of our record for funding public transit.

Let me just read further from the same letter that my colleague read. It said, "To suggest that subway lines would really be closed is about as absurd as suggesting we shut down water supplies in parts of the city to reduce costs." These were the comments made by Mr Ducharme in his letter to us. Thanks to the events and us putting \$1.05 billion with the assistance of three levels of government and another \$90 million that we're giving to the TTC, I am really proud that the TTC is in good shape.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is to the Minister of Finance. As the minister knows, small businesses in this province are the backbone of economic growth and job creation. In fact,

they've created most of the one million jobs between 1995 and 2003. However, as Minister of Finance during the almost past six months, you have now put those new jobs and future job creation at risk.

I have recently heard from many small businesses in the hospitality industry, including an individual who operates an East Side Mario's who writes to me, "Policy decisions made during the first 100 days of our new government will cost employers thousands of additional dollars. Hydro increases, minimum wage increases, elimination of scheduled tax cuts, the introduction of a new recycling tax and skyrocketing insurance costs will place small businesses at risk and cost jobs."

I would ask the minister, why are you breaking your election promise to help small businesses grow and create jobs?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I'd like to tell my friend opposite that, contrary to the tone of her question, the steps we've taken even in our first six months have improved the environment for small businesses. Indeed, Bill 2, dealing with a number of revenue matters, expanded the exemption for small businesses so that the level of income tax they would pay would be less.

We are also looking province-wide at a small business category possibly for realty taxes so that the burden of realty tax on small business will be lower. Indeed, in every single policy measure we take, we look at the particular issues relating to small business because we agree with the member that small business is the backbone of this economy, and we will do nothing to weaken that backbone.

Mrs Witmer: I've checked the minister's Web site. There is nothing on there to indicate that this government is helping small business create jobs and help grow the economy. I would say to the minister, not only are your government's policies going to kill jobs in this province, but some possible new budget initiatives are going to further hurt the food service industry.

I received a letter from an individual who owns some McDonalds restaurants. He has written to tell me that he is strongly opposed to your proposed elimination of the retail sales tax exemption on meals under \$4 since it will have a devastating impact on his business. As you know, in your Liberal election platform you promised to protect low taxes for small businesses. Why are you now prepared to make the McHappy meal the McTaxMe meal and increase the tax burden on hard-working Ontarians?

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Hon Mr Sorbara: I want to tell my friend simply this: that among all the people in this House and this province, I am the one person who is not permitted to speculate on what might or might not be in the upcoming budget. I would simply say to her that if she would do us the courtesy of having a look at Bill 2, she will see measures in there that raise the small business exemption from \$320,000 to \$400,000. Hundreds and thousands of small businesses benefit from that exemption and will pay less corporate tax as a result of it.

All the way through she will see, if she follows along, that our interest is in creating a very strong small business sector, but without doing what that party did in the course of its eight years in government, and that is to almost bankrupt this province.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, today your ministry announced plans to divert 60% of the province's waste by 2008. In my riding of Sarnia-Lambton, my constituents have to deal with over 160 trucks filled with garbage from the GTA driving through our community on a daily basis on their way to Michigan. How will this plan to divert 60% of Ontario's waste impact my community in terms of truck traffic and pollution from those trucks?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): That is a very important question, and I think the people of Ontario want to understand the waste plan that this government will put in place.

We believe, number one, that we need to embark on a comprehensive education program to have the people of Ontario understand how important it is that we divert as much waste as possible away from landfill sites. We also plan to assist municipalities and private sector investors as we review the environmental assessment process and identify those parts of the process that do not enable them to look for local solutions to their municipal solid waste in a timely way. This government has recognized that we have to develop sustainable policies for sustainable communities, and that is what the initiative that is underway and what the expert panel will bring to this Minister of the Environment and the government: an effective plan.

Ms Di Cocco: Along with today's waste diversion announcement, you have also announced the protection of the Adams mine lake. Ontario has been plagued for years with problems in environmental assessment review processes. This has been a particular problem in my riding, as has been the case with the Adams mine proposal. Minister, what are we doing to strengthen that environmental assessment process?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: I was very proud earlier today to introduce the Adams Mine Lake Act. I think it underlines to the people of Ontario this government's commitment to protecting source water.

But we also recognize that if we are going to assist municipalities and provide them with the tools they need to engage industry partners to ensure that our high standard for protecting the environment is intact, we need to have a better process, one that offers a more timely means for them to address their municipal solid waste needs. That is what we've identified. We will have an expert panel of all participants—environmentalists, scientists, industry and municipalities—to provide us with advice on how we can move forward and ensure that our environment is protected and that we have a plan for sustainable communities in the province of Ontario.

AUTISM SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Acting Premier. Minister, on September 17, 2003, Dalton McGuinty wrote to Nancy Morrison and said, "I also believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over age six is unfair and discriminatory. The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond"—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. May I ask the member in the gallery to sit down, please, so the member can proceed with her question?

Ms Martel: Nancy Morrison is in the gallery today, and so are Cynthia, Brad and Jordan Boufford, of London. They came here today to demand that you live up to your promise.

You see, on May 5, five weeks from now, Jordan will turn six, and his medically necessary IBI treatment will be arbitrarily cut off and he will become another victim of your government's discrimination against autistic children. Acting Premier, why is your government breaking its promise to Jordan and these families?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I know the Minister of Children and Youth Services will want to comment on this.

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I thank the member opposite for her question and her commitment to children with special needs.

Just last week, I made an announcement that the McGuinty government will support children right from preschool to the end of high school with respect to their needs, and we will be infusing \$10 million more for IBI therapy for preschool children and \$30 million a year more to train teachers and educational assistants on ABA. We will also be instituting a chair, with my colleague Minister Chambers, to research autism, its determinants and better therapies and educational programs. We are committed to these children, and we showed that 10 days ago with our announcement.

Ms Martel: Minister, the specific question was, why is your government breaking its promise to end discrimination against children who have autism who are over the age of six? That's what this question is about. The Bouffords today brought 7,011 letters to Queen's Park, signed by Ontarians who believe that your Premier should keep the promise he made, who believe that IBI should be provided to every autistic child who needs it. Without IBI, Jordan would never have learned to speak, to count, to read, to play with his peers, to play with puzzles, even to play with his family as he does today. With ongoing IBI, he might be able to understand about safety and safety rules, about how to play independently, about how to follow instructions, about how to tell his mom and dad how his day was. Your Premier made a specific promise to end the discrimination. Why are you breaking that promise?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: The McGuinty government acknowledges the use of IBI therapy for children. That is

why we are infusing another \$10 million a year for that therapy. As well, we are putting money into capacity building for the therapists, not only to increase the number of therapists but to improve their education from two weeks—presently it's two weeks to train an IBI therapist—to one to two years.

When I first inherited this portfolio—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Are we going to allow the minister to respond?

Minister, would you complete your answer?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: When I first inherited this portfolio, I asked my ministry to consult, to forget everything else and to do what is right for the kids; to forget all the politics, leave all that aside, get expert consultation and do the right thing, which is what we have done. Dr Peter Szatmari, director of the Offord Centre for Child Studies, and the Autism Society of Ontario, representing the parents of children with autism, endorse this plan. The executive director of Surrey Place and Ron Scarfone, vice-president of the London chapter of the Autism Society of Ontario, say it's absolutely the right thing to do. We are moving in the right direction.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Before I ask the question, I would like to say how pleased my wife and I were to see you, Minister, and many other elected officials at the Cecilia Zhang memorial service on Saturday. Sadly, events like these bring into perspective the realities of life we face each day.

Minister, since your party formed the government, numerous volunteer firefighters have been forced to resign from small rural fire departments. Last Wednesday, you mentioned in a response to the member from Simcoe-Grey a mediation process that you would like to have in place to resolve the double-hatter issue. Can you clarify exactly what you meant by "mediation," or is this just another stalling tactic while we lose valuable volunteer firefighters in rural Ontario?

1500

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): Members will know that there has been an ongoing dispute between the association of professional firefighters, the fire marshal's office, the fire chiefs, AMO and all others who are concerned about the fact that volunteer firemen who are also professional firefighters are being prevented from responding to fires.

This is unacceptable. The idea that any citizen of Ontario would be put at risk because of a dispute between two factions that are in dispute is unacceptable.

Having said that, I have been meeting with all of the parties for some time and have told them that if we can't mediate this, then I will bring in legislation. I stand by that statement. The mediation is being scoped so that

they know coming in exactly the direction we would like to go.

Mr Dunlop: Duplication mediation I don't believe is the answer. I understand that when my colleague Bob Runciman was the minister, he appointed the Honourable George W. Adams, a renowned mediation expert, to conduct talks with fire services stakeholder groups on this very delicate issue. He couldn't find a compromise, but he recommended a solution.

So I say to you that the answer is right before you in the form of the Adams report. I ask you, now that the safety of small-town Ontario is at risk—and believe me, it is at risk—when will you implement recommendations of the Adams report? I'd ask you to get on with this job and stop the loss of volunteer firefighters in rural Ontario. They're very important to our small communities, and I'd really appreciate a quick response to this.

Hon Mr Kwinter: There is common consensus that the Adams report was not acceptable and not the basis for any sort of resolution. As a result of that, I have decided that if we can get the parties together and give them some ground rules and some parameters so that they know what we're trying to accomplish, we can get them back to the table. Everybody has acknowledged that if we can get a mediated solution, that's the way to go; if we can't, then we will bring in legislation.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Recently I met with community representatives regarding services and quality of care for people with developmental disabilities in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh.

Under the past Tory government, there was a band-aid solution provided to agencies serving individuals with developmental disabilities. The funding announcement of September 2001 was disappointing and had no long-term goals.

Currently in my riding, there are 49 adults and 34 children with special needs on a waiting list for residential housing. I am told that this number is actually closer to 100, with families who have yet to formally contact agencies due to guilt of stating that they can no longer care for the members of their family or frustrations with the residential placement process and waiting lists.

Living spaces are much needed in my community. Can you tell me what your ministry's intentions are in rectifying the issues regarding housing placements for developmentally disabled individuals in eastern Ontario?

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I appreciate very much the question regarding developmental services that this government is determined to provide across the province.

I was very happy about a month ago to be at Reena's place, which is one of our agencies that does tremendous work with the developmental services being provided in

Ontario. That day, we were able to announce and actually begin work on more places to live in the community for those with developmental disabilities. On that day, we announced some \$14 million for creating places in the community.

In this individual region of eastern Ontario, we believe there is some \$900,000 being applied. I can certainly have a look into this member's riding specifically.

I can tell you that this is step 1. We have a long way to go. This is the first in two years of announcements that have never actually materialized in places to live for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Mr Brownell: I'm pleased to hear that you are taking this seriously, and I know that in my riding we are interested in hearing of your review and the placement allotment. I know that the close to 100 family members who are coping with this will be glad to hear it, and they thank you for your comments and reassurances.

Safe and stable group homes are important for individuals with developmental difficulties, allowing them healthier and more independent living arrangements. They're also a grave necessity for many families. Recently you announced an investment of \$24 million in capital and operating funding for 44 projects in 27 communities around the province. Can you inform this House what this funding means for Ontarians with developmental disabilities?

Hon Ms Pupatello: The member refers to the announcement that we just made, which will represent upwards of 180 places in the community for people to live—180 across Ontario. In eastern Ontario, that represents seven places. I will acknowledge, as will most people in the House, that we will not be able to do enough fast enough because there is such a growing demand for individuals to live independently so they can live happy, healthy lives in the community.

But the difference is this: Monies have been announced in the past, but we have gone two long years without a single space being created in the community. Let me tell this House today that we anticipate, from an announcement that was made last month, that the individuals will begin moving this June. This government is about action.

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Minister, you have yet to announce promised funds to help farmers implement nutrient management regulations, which of course, you would be aware, was an election promise that the Liberals put forward. Farmers have to solidify their business plans right now to be ready for the next growing season. How are farmers supposed to make proper business decisions without all the information? Should they sell their livestock right now because of the uncertainty you have caused or should they go forward with their plans and possibly go bankrupt because the costs of nutrient management implementation are just too high?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I thank the member for the question. Unlike the previous government, we are moving forward with working with the agricultural community. We have the nutrient management advisory committee in place, which is currently reviewing funding opportunities and funding options. They will soon be reporting to me. As well, we have commissioned the George Morris Centre to complete a report as to what the fiscal implications are of the nutrient management legislation. Our intent is to use that as part of the budget planning process, and you'll hear an announcement when the budget is announced.

Mr Hardeman: I gather from that answer that at this point you have not committed to any funding for the nutrient management plan implementation. I can see it is quickly becoming another broken promise of the Liberal government of Ontario.

Your colleague the Minister of the Environment said in the House that your government intends to implement every one of O'Connor's recommendations. How is it that recommendation 7—"The provincial government should ensure that sufficient funds are available to complete the planning and adoption of source protection plans"—isn't one of the promises you were going to keep? I ask again, when will our farmers get some funds, Mr Minister: when they go out of business waiting for the McGuinty government to keep one of their promises?

Hon Mr Peters: The McGuinty government is very committed to its promises and to this issue. The Premier reiterated three weeks ago at the Ontario Cattlemen's Association that there are societal benefits to clean water and the cost of the implementation of those regulations should not be borne on the backs of farmers alone.

But we're going to keep one more promise that this government didn't keep. This government commissioned a study. They commissioned the George Morris Centre and they had a purple-copied report done. Do you know what? They would not make that information public. They chose to hide from the farmers of Ontario the costs of their implementation. This government is going to be straightforward with the farmers of Ontario. When that report is completed and we've had it reviewed, it is going to be made public, not hidden away like this previous government did.

1510

HYDRO RATES

Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): My question is for the Minister of Energy. The restructuring of energy pricing under Bill 4 took effect on April 1, 2004. My constituents have asked me questions on how the new pricing will affect their bill this month.

This week, I received a call from a constituent, Mrs Elaine Ellis. She has a question for you regarding pricing. She wants to ensure that she will be assessed fairly. Given that the more reasonable price of energy took place on April 1, how are homeowners in Brampton Centre going to be assessed on their next bill, given that

the change in pricing plan happened in the middle of a billing period?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): The artificial price cap of the Tories was unsustainable. The 4.3% cap just could not work. We introduced legislation after we saw the books and saw that we had inherited a \$5.6-billion deficit from a government that routinely handed out contracts to people like Paul Rhodes and others.

With respect to the specific situation in Brampton, where April 1 falls in the middle of billing periods, we have empowered the local distribution company to assess the new price relative to the old price. I would suggest to the member for Brampton Centre that she can relay to her constituent that she will be paying the new rates effective April 1 only on that portion of the bill that those new rates fall into.

Mrs Jeffrey: I'll be sure to pass your response on to Mrs Ellis.

There's been a lot of talk recently about energy conservation and the introduction of energy-smart meters. My constituents have a lot of questions about the smart meters and their cost. They want to know when they'll be available and where they can get more information. Further, my constituents want to know, what are the government's plans to assist them in the conservation of energy?

Hon Mr Duncan: We intend to make smart meters readily available to electricity consumers throughout the province. By facilitating the shifting of demand, smart meters will not only benefit us but they will save consumers money on their electricity bills. The Tories never understood that. Those meters will be available soon.

I'd like to point out that a number of notable organizations in this province have endorsed our energy pricing policy. Why don't we review who those are? The Ontario Medical Association has endorsed our policy; the Ontario Public Health Association; the Clean Air Partnership has endorsed our policy; the environmental alliance has endorsed our policy; the Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance has endorsed our policy; the Ontario Sustainable Energy Association has endorsed our policy; the Ontario Clean Air Alliance has endorsed our policy; Greenpeace Canada has endorsed our policy; the Association of Municipalities of Ontario has endorsed our policy; the Ontario Chamber of Commerce has endorsed our policy; the independent power producers' association has endorsed our policy; the electricity—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

Hon Mr Duncan: The Electricity Distributors Association has endorsed our policy; the Sierra Club of Canada has endorsed our policy.

I'm sorry, Mr Speaker; I do have a number of others to read.

The Speaker: Perhaps the minister would look at my side and speak through the Chair. Then he would see when I said, "Stop."

HIGHWAY TOLLS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. During the election campaign, Liberals told the people of Hamilton that you're all in favour of the Red Hill Creek Expressway. What you didn't tell them is that you were also all in favour of toll roads. You didn't tell them that the Red Hill Creek Expressway and the Lincoln Alexander Parkway might be targeted as toll roads.

The city of Hamilton is short about \$19.5 million because of the download of social assistance, so they're actually considering your scheme of new toll roads. Is this your government's answer to the hard-pressed people of Hamilton: Turn your toll roads and arterial roads into charge-every-time-you-drive?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I know that the Minister of Transportation is anxious to answer this question.

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I'm sure that the honourable member is not going to like what I have to say. We are absolutely committed to building safe and vital highways. We are very proud of our commitment to give \$106 million for building this highway. This highway is, in fact, being constructed by the city of Hamilton, and it is up to them to decide whether this highway is tolled or not tolled.

Mr Hampton: My question was, is this going to be a toll road? Since you and the Premier got all excited about toll roads, a consultant study has figured out that \$14 million could be pried from the pockets of Hamiltonians by turning these roads into toll roads. Once again, this is a regressive tax. It hits the hardest at people who have the lowest incomes.

The problem is that you aren't providing hard-pressed cities with the finances they need to look after the cost of all of the services that have been downloaded. Tell the people of Hamilton that the Lincoln Alexander Parkway won't be a toll road and that the Red Hill Creek Expressway won't be a toll road. Tell them now.

Hon Mr Takhar: I am really surprised that this member is asking us about toll roads when, in fact, they constructed Highway 407 and put the tolls on that highway. They are actually the authors of and experts on tolls.

POLICE COMPLAINTS

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): My question is to the Acting Premier. I received a letter dated March 26 with respect to implementing a new police complaint system. The Attorney General stated in his letter, "I'm of the view that we need to restore the trust and confidence of the members of the community and the respect of the police." I ask the Acting Premier, why does the government feel that the confidence of the community needs to be restored? Who lost the people's confidence?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I think probably the best thing to do on this question would be to take it as notice. I'm sure that the Attorney General, when he returns to Parliament tomorrow, will be very happy to answer it. I would just say very, very briefly, we have every single confidence in the Attorney General's ability to restore the confidence that is so desperately needed by our police forces all across the province of Ontario.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask for unanimous consent to pass second and third reading of Bill 29, An Act to ensure that the producers of electronic equipment retain responsibility when their products become waste. Can I have unanimous consent?

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I think I heard a no.

UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Today you indicated concern with respect to a comment made by the member for Nepean-Carleton and some terminology he used in posing a question.

I want to advise you, Speaker, that we did a very quick search of Hansard with respect to the wording that you were concerned about. We found numerous references and questions posed in the past by Mr Phillips, Mr Kennedy, Mr Cordiano, and Ms McLeod, just to mention a few. I will ask a page to deliver this to you and to the table.

What I'm really looking for is clarity with respect to the use of words, language, props, whatever you may describe. It's causing some confusion on this side of the House.

1520

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I want to thank the member for raising that point. The fact is that I was ruling at the time; I wasn't ruling on Ms McLeod or any other time that comment was made. I was ruling at the time when I heard the word and I asked with respect that the member recognize the Chair and withdraw that comment.

As I said earlier on in the Legislature, and as I have read in the Legislature, I will ask the member to withdraw comments like these, which are unparliamentary. Failing to do that, I may name the member or decide not to see the member, feeling that when he chooses to do so, then we can proceed with his engagement and involvement in the process today.

Mr Runciman: I very much appreciate those comments. Our concern is what is or is not parliamentary and how you reach those conclusions. We'd like to have some better understanding—

The Speaker: I don't intend today to tell you what words are parliamentary or not. I will rule as it comes about. Thank you.

We're at petitions now.

PETITIONS

DIALYSIS

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have here a petition that I have just one page of, but in fact 1,600 people signed the petition in one single day.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital has asked for ministerial consent to make capital changes to its facility to accommodate the placement of a satellite dialysis unit; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has already given approval for the unit and committed operational dollars to it; and

"Whereas the community has already raised the funds for the equipment needed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care give his final approval of the capital request change from the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital immediately, so those who are in need of these life-sustaining dialysis services can receive them locally, thereby enjoying a better quality of life without further delay."

I present this on their behalf and sign it, as I totally agree with it.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition which I've signed my name to and I agree with. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario have asked for a better health care system which is focused on the quality of care and is accountable to the people;

"Whereas this system should be publicly controlled, publicly accountable and publicly owned,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support Bill 8 in order to ban two-tier health care and protect the future of medicare in this province."

I submit this to the assembly.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present a petition signed by a number of seniors from Dunnville, Ontario, including Jay Haidon and Gerald Wile. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas during the election campaign the Dalton McGuinty Liberals said they would improve the Ontario drug benefit program but now are considering delisting drugs and imposing higher user fees; and

"Whereas the Liberal government has increased costs to seniors by taking away the seniors' property tax rebate and increased the price of hydro;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should keep their campaign promise to improve the Ontario drug benefit program and abandon their plan to delist drugs or increase seniors' drug fees."

In support, my signature is affixed.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to present to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario the following petition on behalf of my riding of Niagara Falls.

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario's professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry or re-entry of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

"Whereas the Liberal government has said in their election platform that they were committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors and are now considering delisting drugs and imposing user fees on seniors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To halt the consideration of imposing an income test, delisting drugs for coverage under the Ontario drug benefit plan or putting in place user fees for seniors, and to maintain the present drug benefit plan for seniors to cover medications."

I support this petition, and I affix my signature to about a thousand names.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas, as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations"—it's been going on since 1978, Minister—"for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on source water protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I'm pleased to sign this, and I hope the minister will listen to this like she did on the Adams mine.

HYDRO RATES

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It is my distinct pleasure to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

"Whereas the province of Ontario has experienced record levels of electricity consumption this" past

"summer, along with lower than expected generating capacity to meet the demand; and

"Whereas this has resulted in higher electricity bills for Ontario consumers; and

"Whereas short-term spikes in the cost of power are a particular hardship to persons on fixed incomes and a detriment to businesses in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request that the government of Ontario act immediately to develop a plan for protecting consumers against excessive short-term increases in the cost of electricity. We further request that the government of Ontario review the impact of charges other than wholesale electrical rates, the goods and services tax (GST) and the debt reduction charges appearing on electricity bill of Ontario consumers."

I'm pleased to submit this on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

CHILDREN'S NUTRITION

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

"Whereas recent scientific research has proven there is a link between children's nutrition and academic performance; and

"Whereas less than 25% of Canadian children eat in accordance with Canada's food guidelines; and

"Whereas Breakfast for Learning, the Canadian Living Foundation, is the only national non-profit organization solely dedicated to supporting child nutrition programs in Canada; and

"Whereas the need for nutrition programs in schools has more than doubled, resulting in grant requests that far exceed the level of funding received from the Ontario provincial government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to commit government support to child nutrition programs by increasing funding to Breakfast for Learning, the Canadian Living Foundation, from \$4.5 million to \$9 million, as requested in their submitted proposal."

I affix my signature because I support it.

1530

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition here. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Municipal Property Assessment Corp (MPAC) has chosen to assess sugar shacks as industrial properties; and

"Whereas sugar shacks are used for the production of maple syrup for only a small portion of the year; and

"Whereas the agriculture protection act clearly defines maple syrup as an agriculture product; and

"Whereas sugar shacks and maple syrup are an important part of the agri-tourism business in rural Ontario; and

"Whereas the province is promoting agri-tourism by small farmers; and

"Whereas, in many cases, the change in assessment will have sugar shack owners paying 10 to 20 times their former assessment rate, forcing the closure of some operations;

"We, the undersigned, request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to hold assessment values at last year's levels until a fairer method of assessment can be developed and implemented or a reclassification of sugar shack properties can be made."

I sign this on behalf of my constituents.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have also received close to 600 names on petitions from customers of maple syrup shacks in my riding, including operations run by Marvin Chambers, who's south of Villa Nova, and Gary Watt, who's south of Waterford.

"Whereas the Municipal Property Assessment Corp (MPAC) has chosen to assess sugar shacks as industrial properties; and

"Whereas sugar shacks are used for the production of maple syrup for only a small portion of the year; and

"Whereas the agriculture protection act clearly defines maple syrup as an agriculture product; and

"Whereas sugar shacks and maple syrup are an important part of the agri-tourism business in rural Ontario; and

"Whereas the province is promoting agri-tourism by small farmers; and

"Whereas in many cases the change in assessment will have a sugar shack owner paying 10 to 20 times their former assessment rate, forcing the closure of some operations;

"We, the undersigned, request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to hold assessment values at last year's levels until a fairer method of assessment can be developed and implemented or a reclassification of sugar shack properties can be made."

I support these petitions and affix my signature.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present another petition from the folks at Black Creek Leisure Homes. This one's signed by Marian Thompson and Mona and Thomas Mitchell, among others. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas during the election campaign the Dalton McGuinty Liberals said they would improve the Ontario drug benefit program but now are considering delisting drugs and imposing higher user fees; and

"Whereas the Liberal government has increased costs to seniors by taking away the seniors' property tax rebate and have increased the price of hydro;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should keep their campaign promise to improve the Ontario drug benefit

program and abandon their plan to delist drugs or increase seniors' drug fees."

In support, my signature.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to present a petition from one of my constituents, Julie Jordan, of Courtice.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in Ontario, adopted adults are denied a right available to all non-adoptees; that is, the unrestricted right to identify information concerning their family of origin;

"Whereas Canada has ratified standards of civil and human rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;

"Whereas these rights are denied to persons affected by the secrecy provisions in the adoption sections of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas research in other jurisdictions has demonstrated that disclosure does not cause harm, that access to such information is beneficial to adult adoptees, adoptive parents and birth parents, and that birth parents rarely requested or were promised anonymity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact revisions of the Child and Family Services Act and to other acts to:

"Permit adult adoptees unrestricted access to full personal identifying birth information;

"Permit birth parents, grandparents and siblings access to the adopted person's amended birth certificate when the adopted person reaches age 18;

"Permit adoptive parents unrestricted access to identifying birth information of their minor children;

"Allow adopted persons and birth relatives to file a contact veto restricting contact by the searching party;

"Replace mandatory reunion counselling with optional counselling."

This is signed by many constituents from across Ontario. I'm pleased to present it to the House on behalf of Julie Jordan today.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I'd like to sign my name to this as well and ask that the minister support this, as she did the Adams mine report.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HEALTH INFORMATION PROTECTION ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA PROTECTION DES RENSEIGNEMENTS SUR LA SANTÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 30, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 31, An Act to enact and amend various Acts with respect to the protection of health information / Projet de loi 31, Loi édictant et modifiant diverses lois en ce qui a trait à la protection des renseignements sur la santé.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, as I call government order number G31, I'd like to inform the House of some urgent information. At the top of the seventh, it's Detroit Tigers, 7; Toronto Blue Jays, 0.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Further debate? Oh, way up there. The member for Don Valley West.

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I'm not going to comment on the—is that a baseball score?

I'm happy to speak to Bill 31. I had the privilege of travelling with the committee around Ontario to hear delegations on this bill, and I want to acknowledge especially the member from Kitchener-Waterloo and the member from Nickel Belt for their comments and

contributions. My experience as a new member on the committee was not so much learning from their partisan arguments but learning from their experience and their knowledge of the area, because, as you've heard them and other speakers say, this bill has been some time in the making. There's been a lot of time for people to—I'm just noticing the clock, Mr Speaker. I think I had to say that I was sharing my time with another member. Did I have to say that at the beginning? I apologize.

The Deputy Speaker: You don't really have to at the beginning, but at some time during, you do then have to say who you're sharing it with.

Ms Wynne: I am going to share my time with the member from London-Fanshawe. I apologize for not stating that up front.

The Deputy Speaker: No apology required. Just continue.

Ms Wynne: OK. We are a generous-hearted party.

As I was saying, having been a member of the committee that travelled with Bill 31 and hearing the delegations and hearing the members who have had long experience with the development of this bill, it was clear to me that there's been time for consensus to develop on this bill. That was a really useful and edifying experience for those of us on the committee, to listen to the refinement of a bill rather than to engage in partisan argument and rhetorical debate throughout the time on the road.

1540

The other thing that I wanted to say about this bill right up front is that it seems to me that this legislation is about dealing with complexity. It's necessary because we have this complex technological world; we have volumes of information that we haven't had in the past, so I think it's really necessary that we have this bill.

The goal of this legislation is to balance the needs of that complex technology that exists now in the health system with the needs of individuals to control their own information. So that technologically advanced system, the plethora of caregivers that exists now to look after individuals, has to be able to do its job to diagnose and treat. But at the same time, individuals need to be able to have control over their own health information.

I know I often make allusions to the past, but it's something about being in this historical place. When my grandfather was practising medicine in north Toronto between 1924 and 1950, I don't think such complexity could have been imagined. I'm reminded of when you start to work out and all of a sudden you have pains where you didn't know you had places. It's almost like this legislation has to be put in place to deal with problems that we didn't even know we had 50 years ago. I think that it's very necessary, but it's going to require intentional procedures. It's going to require health care providers and agencies to be very intentional about how they put these procedures in place, and that's going to take some doing.

The member from Nickel Belt talked about the implementation issue. I'm going to come back to that later in my remarks because I think it's a very important point.

The relationship between the patient and the health care provider has drastically changed over the last decades. We assume now that it's in our best interests to be active participants in the management of our health care. In order for us to do that, we have to have rules and procedures in place that require health care providers to interact with us in particular ways. To a large extent, that's what this bill is about. Bill 31 sets a framework in place to facilitate the responsible information management that we all require.

Why do we need this health information privacy legislation? What is it going to do? First of all, currently there is a real lack of consistent rules governing what information can be collected and how that information can be disclosed. What this bill means is that personal health information will be protected in a clear and consistent manner. Ontarians will have a legislated right of access to their own health information. Privacy protection for personal health information is located in different statutes and professional standards, so the rules aren't consistent. This bill pulls that in and makes sure those are all located in one place.

There is also federal legislation in place. You've heard other speakers say this. The Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, or PIPEDA, as we called it on the committee, was not developed with health care information in mind. It's not clear on whom it applies to and when there is need for express consent for transfers of personal health information. So we need additional legislation to put those protections in place.

This legislation also specifies rules around the destruction of personal health information, because it's not just the production; it's what do you do with health information when it has to be destroyed? And finally, what does destruction of the information mean?

We need legislation that will allow doctors and other primary health care providers to share information with each other about an individual where that information is necessary.

Bill 31 addresses these issues. It sets out consistent rules on collection, use and disclosure of information; it brings health information privacy protection rules into one statute; it complements the federal legislation, which was not designed to deal with health information; it allows the flow of health information within the circle of care providers around an individual; and it restricts the flow of health information when that's the desire of the patient. All of those things are necessary to have in place. That's what Bill 31 does.

There were a few amendments that were asked for repeatedly in our travels. I wanted to mention two of them in particular that we have responded to in the amendments. I think they've gone a long way to making interested parties in the province feel that this is a piece of legislation that is going to work.

First of all, the change of date of enactment of the bill from July 1, 2004, as it was originally stated, to January 1, 2005: This change in the timing of the enactment will give health care providers the time they need. It will also

give the government the time it needs to implement the changes that need to be put into place.

The second amendment that was asked for repeatedly has to do with the fundraising issue. I know that other speakers have spoken to this, and I'm sure more will, but this was an issue that was raised over and over by hospitals and hospital foundations. In the case of the need for hospital fundraising, the OHA and hospital foundations from around the province argued that they need to be able to use and disclose limited personal health information, name and prescribed contact information only, for fundraising purposes. They need to use that with the implied consent of patients.

The argument they made was that if they were required to get express consent from every patient, every grateful patient who left their facility, their donations would drop dramatically. We were told that the projection was that up to 90% of the donations from that grateful patient group could be lost if they were required to get express consent from every patient who went through their doors.

So what has been done is that the amendment has been put in place that will allow those organizations to fundraise with implied consent. Of course, patients will always have the option to say, "I'm not interested in fundraising," they can opt out of that process, but hospitals will be allowed to act on implied consent. That amendment has gone a long way to making stakeholders feel comfortable with this legislation.

I want to give my time to the member for London-Fanshawe, but there are a couple of other things I wanted to say about this legislation.

I spoke this morning with the Canadian Mental Health Association, because one of the areas that was the most sensitive was that of personal health information among mental patients: how institutions can deal with that particularly sensitive issue and when and if it can be disclosed. So I wanted to follow up with the mental health association to see how they were feeling now that the bill has had the amendments put in place.

I'm happy to report that they are very happy with the state the legislation is in at this point. They stand by their statement in their deputation that they were particularly pleased about the inclusion of programs such as housing, employment supports and peer supports, which aren't normally defined as health care, being part of that definition because those are the things that are needed for mental health patients. Having those as part of the definition means that the whole spectrum of care that they provide is included in this legislation. They're ecstatic that this bill is going forward. I think that speaks volumes to the sensitivity with which the legislation has been written, but also to the amendments that have been put in place that have dealt with people's concerns.

The lockbox issue I think really epitomizes one of the issues that highlights the tension between the need to provide good health care—good diagnosis, good treatment—and the need for individuals to have control of their health information. What the lockbox does is it

allows individuals to hold back certain information, but practitioners will know, when they get information, that they're not getting the complete information. That's the balance that was struck. Although there were people who argued on both sides, we in the government felt that going forward with this legislation with the lockbox in place was the responsible thing to do.

The process of refining Bill 31 has been an illuminating one for all of us who had the opportunity to travel with the committee and respond to the interested parties who came forward to talk to us. This kind of collaborative consensus-building is not possible, I recognize, on every piece of legislation. Ideologies and philosophies will intervene. But wherever we can work together and wherever we can put the public good, the public interest, right at the centre of the debate and write legislation that speaks to that public interest, we're going to be serving the needs of Ontarians much better.

1550

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): First, I would like to thank the member for Don Valley West for her details about Bill 31. I think she went with the committee more than me, travelled the whole province and listened to the many delegates from across Ontario talking about this bill. I had the privilege of listening to many people when the committee came to London.

I'm honoured today to support this bill, because one of the elements of the bill is that it is a true reflection of the commitment of Dalton McGuinty's government to protect the people of this province. This bill will protect patients who visit doctors, hospitals—protect their rights and protect their information concerning health care.

I think this bill is very important in enhancing health care in this province for many reasons. First, it will allow the many facilities in this province to share information with the consent of patients. Before, we didn't have anything in place to protect patients when they go to see doctors or go to the hospital or to any institution in this province, because we didn't have any clear bill to regulate and facilitate this issue. And it is very important to us to—

Interjection.

Mr Ramal: I guess the comment from the member from—is it Simcoe? I know they are always on the negative side. It doesn't matter what we do, they're always on the negative side. That's OK.

When the committee came to London, I listened to many people and I listened to their concerns. One of their concerns that got my attention was the right of institutions to use patient information in order to fundraise. As you know, many hospitals and health institutions in this province are facing difficult times financially. They use that right to call many people in order to generate money to keep their institution functioning. As the speaker from Don Valley stated, they amended this bill to allow some institutions to use names for fundraising.

Another very important thing is that some people were concerned about the Minister of Health having the right to get information about patients. As a matter of fact, the bill will never give permission to the Minister of Health

to be privy to any personal information about any patient without consent from the patient.

I was pleased to participate in some of the discussions on this matter and to talk to many delegates who came to London to see if the bill reflects the beliefs of people in this province or not. As I said, I was very pleased to listen. They were comfortable, very happy to see the government of Ontario, the Dalton McGuinty government, trying to consult with them on anything or seek their opinion on very important matters in their lives.

Also, it is very important too, when the patient goes to the doctor, that the patient has a right not to consent to allow the doctor to use their information for any reason unless the information would help eliminate some strange disease or protect the patient from any problem that might occur in the future.

Another important piece of this bill talks about using electronic equipment to receive information. As you know, our lives today are controlled by electronic devices. Some concerns from some delegates were brought up, because when the information goes into a computer, they're concerned about some people who may have access to it. This bill will protect that right. If the government or the commission feels this information is being moved or will be accessible by different sources, they'll have a right to destroy this information and protect the patient.

As we listened to many stakeholders in this province, the government, in conjunction with the institutions of health in this province, tried to hold many educational sessions to educate patients and educate the people in this province about their rights, about how the bill works and about how it can protect them from being exposed to many people in this province.

I think the importance of this bill is that for the first time it will organize health care and the secrecy of health care in this province. At the same time, it will allow the institution to share information in order to protect the patient and enhance the structure of the health care in this province. In the meantime, it will give the right to institutions, especially hospitals, to use some information to raise funds to continue to develop and maintain their existence in this province.

As I mentioned, between 50% and 60% of health institutions in this province continue functioning on fundraising. This bill and that concern, according to the people who went with the committee, and when I listened to my colleague from Don Valley—they added the amendment to absorb all the concerns and make it easier for all the stakeholders in this province to function in conjunction with the government of Ontario. So I believe we are on the right track. That's why I'm speaking today in support of this bill, and I hope all members from both sides will agree with us and move forward in order to make sure the bill will pass with the full co-operation of all the people in this Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise today and make a few comments on Bill 8—I'm sorry, Bill 31.

Let me make it clear: I support Bill 31, and I believe a lot of our party will be supporting it as well. We think it's the right thing to do, and we think there's been enough debate on this bill. You have to remember that in one way or another this bill has been around, I believe, for the third or fourth time. Quite frankly, it's time to get on with this. I've mentioned before that I'll support it, and I will again.

Of course, Bill 8 is another story. We don't agree with that, and that's clear. I don't think anybody in our caucus will be supporting it in its present form. However, I think there's no question, as I listened to your democratic renewal plans, that there will be further committee hearings after second reading debate is completed on that. We fully expect that, and we think the citizens of Ontario and organizations like hospital boards, etc., are certainly looking forward to more comment on that as well.

As we said earlier, this bill has been around before. I know Minister Witmer worked on it previously and had come to our caucus at different times talking about her support of it. There have been a few little amendments made here and there, but it seems like the right thing to do at this time. Again, if there's a problem with it, we can go back. I don't know how long we're actually debating this, this time around. I believe we're having one or two more days on second reading, and then we should probably go to third reading fairly quickly.

Again, it's the right thing to do. It's not very often in this House, I believe, that we'll be supporting government bills. But I think, as a member of the opposition, I can stand here today and say congratulations to the government on their work on this and to Minister Smitherman. It's probably his first bill that will go through the House, and I'll be supporting it and hopefully work well with it.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I'll repeat what I said last week; that is, New Democrats are supporting Bill 31. There's certainly a great deal of agreement more than disagreement. There are concerns, and I will raise one or two as I speak in my responses to each speaker.

The first one I will raise in response to the members from London-Fanshawe and Don Valley West is the whole issue of the cost of implementation. Both of you, and many of the Liberals, know that in implementing such bills there are costs in order to comply, and those costs can be very, very high for many hospitals, long-term-care facilities and doctor's offices. We know the Canadian Mental Health Association told us that many of their branches are so small, they don't even have computer technology. We know that as we go, unless we find ways to deal with the issues of technology and training, which involve money, health sector organizations will have a difficult time complying.

1600

There's no disagreement with much of what's in Bill 31, unlike Bill 8 where we do strongly disagree, including many of your Liberal friends such as former

Liberal MPP Mr Bernard Grandmaître, who said of Bill 8, "As a Liberal, I have seen better days. This law, Bill 8, is not the product of the Liberal Party that I know. In fact, it is in flagrant contradiction to some of the most basic principles that inspire and have always inspired my party. This bill is a serious breach of confidence and of democratic principles, and like Mr Lalonde, it's hard for me to believe this is being done by a Liberal government."

Bill 8 is a different matter and you'll have New Democrats and Liberals attacking you, whereas in Bill 31 there are more areas of consensus. Again, I hope you'll be dealing with the issue of implementation costs.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It is a pleasure. I'll be speaking later on this afternoon on Bill 31 because I was parliamentary assistant to the Ministers of Health at the time, Elizabeth Witmer as well as Tony Clement. I only say that when we were in government, we did bring in two pieces of legislation, a consultation paper on the whole issue of privacy in health and patients' rights. The three key words, of course, are: collect, use and disclose. I don't think the problem has actually been solved. I think that most of this will show up in regulation, but when we were in government, the now-government, then in opposition, called this draconian, a Big Brother of the oversight that this issue has.

Out of respect in the few seconds that I have, I want to pay a great deal of respect to Gilbert Sharpe, who helped me during the consultations on the first draft of the health privacy legislation. Gilbert, of course, was the author of the Mental Health Act and an esteemed deputy minister—I think assistant deputy minister of health at one time—to Elizabeth Witmer and Tony Clement, who, both as Ministers of Health, tried to resolve this important piece of infrastructure to provide smart health.

If you look at the public accounts records, you'll find that this government spent in excess of \$2 billion setting up some of the examples which I'll speak of in great detail this afternoon. One of them is Smart Systems for Health, where they integrated the nine modules of health providers into one seamless system of proper patient information. Ann Cavoukian, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, was also part of the broader consultations on health privacy.

To the viewer today, the big issue, the one to watch for, is the issue of who is the custodian. The custodian of the records is absolutely the most critical thing for patient privacy. There are certain types of information, it has been argued, that should be in the lockbox or not available. I'll have more to say on this this afternoon, but in the general spirit of cooperation, we will be supporting this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Don Valley West has two minutes to reply.

Ms Wynne: Thank you to the member for Simcoe North, the member for Trinity-Spadina and the member for Durham for your comments. To the member for Simcoe North, I would say, it is time to get on with it, and that's why we're doing this. Thank you for your

support on that. To the member for Durham, I would say that the procedures—I think I referred to this in my remarks—that we have to put in place, we couldn't have imagined 50 years ago. I think he would agree with that. They're very technical and complex.

I want to respond to the comments from the member for Trinity-Spadina about implementation. I know this is an issue that was raised by the member for Nickel Belt. In my conversations this morning with some of the stakeholders, it was made clear to me that this remains a concern, the issue of implementation, how it's going to be done and what the supports are going to be. What I wanted to say is that the ministry is in conversation with the OHA, the OMA and the Information and Privacy Commissioner to try to work out a coordinated way of supporting providers as they go about putting these procedures in place, because it's not going to be simple. It's a highly technical bill and, as I said before, it's going to take very intentional measures on the part of health care providers to put these provisions in place.

I'm happy to say that the information I have from the ministry is that they are talking with the OMA, the OHA and the Information and Privacy Commissioner to provide a coordinated response. Obviously, the detail of the implementation is going to be what's going to be relevant to the people on the ground delivering health care. So we can talk at a high level, but it's going to be when the rubber hits the road in terms of the provision of the information and what technology is needed, and that conversation is happening now.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

I know who I'm not going to give the floor to now after that signal from the member from Durham. If I see that one more time—

Mr O'Toole: Oh, baloney. I didn't do anything.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to join the debate with respect to Bill 31. I remember watching the hearings with respect to the debate and discussion on this bill, which is An Act to enact and amend various Acts with respect to the protection of health information. It certainly is a piece of legislation that deserves extensive review. I think it had a lot of consultation with respect to what was going on.

I'd like to start by paying tribute to the cooperative spirit and hard work on both sides of this House which has created this legislation.

It was the previous government that first had the vision and the courage to tackle the very difficult and controversial issue of the privacy of health care records. As my honourable friends across the floor have no doubt learned, this is an issue filled with special challenges.

First of all, anything to do with the privacy of personal information is going to be sensitive. This is simply human nature. Information about ourselves, particularly about our physical or mental health, our bodies and minds, is as personal as it gets.

Second, computers and other technology have dramatically changed the playing field. People are understandably concerned about the electronic storage of information. When a file is no longer a big, thick folder full of paper but a mere burst of electronic data, it opens up the potential for new threats to the security of health care records. New technologies have made extensive record-keeping and the transmission of information easier but have left security of that information more and more difficult to maintain.

The third reason that it is a difficult issue to tackle is the sheer number of stakeholders involved. Health care privacy not only directly affects every person and family in Ontario, it also is of intense interest to every organization and company involved in diagnostics, treatment, pharmaceuticals, chronic care, health insurance, and on and on. Each of these sectors has its concerns and its ideas.

It took tremendous courage to walk into that minefield and start addressing the many sensitive and complex issues involved. It took someone like my colleague the member for Kitchener-Waterloo to take those first fearless steps as Minister of Health. I think that all of the members of this House and the people of Ontario owe a debt of gratitude to Elizabeth Witmer for initiating action on this important issue. I know that my friend representing Kitchener-Waterloo has already spoken in the House on this bill and she has paid tribute to the current government for its cooperative and open mind in amending the legislation.

I would like to add my voice to the chorus of appreciation, particularly in light of the treatment we have seen over similar issues such as Bill 8. It is refreshing to receive the kind of positive reception to concerns and ideas we have seen with respect to Bill 31. Frankly, this House and this government could use more of this kind of positive, co-operative work. Too often we have seen this government fall into the trap of refusing to consider useful and even necessary amendments to its legislation simply because the changes are proposed by the opposition. There's a similar trap that opposition parties can fall into in which government bills are opposed simply for the sake of taking a stand contradictory to that of the government. Both these kinds of automatic responses should be avoided if we are to accomplish the genuine business of this place: debating and helping create useful laws for the people of Ontario.

For all these reasons I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak about the Ontario Health Information Protection Act. As it now stands, Bill 31 is a much-improved piece of legislation compared to what we saw at first reading. As I said, this is due to some outstanding work and input from the member for Kitchener-Waterloo and others on this side of the House, and the very non-partisan and productive spirit on the other side.

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I believe this legislation holds together very well and will contribute significantly to its stated goals. That may not sound like much, but given the sorry state of some of

the legislation we've seen proposed by this government, it is very high praise indeed. My honourable friends opposite do not seem too happy, although I'm trying to pay them a compliment. What we now have with Bill 31 is legislation that will go a long way toward protecting the confidentiality of health care records. It is not perfect, it is full of compromises and there are a couple of unfinished corners that I will address in a few moments, but overall, it is a solid bill of legislation.

What I would like to speak about today is the challenge of implementing Bill 31, because the success or failure of these important initiatives is still very much up in the air. Solid legislation like we have here is not enough to ensure the privacy of health records. It will take care, dedication and ongoing attention from this government to make sure that the goals set out in Bill 31 are actually achieved.

First, it must recognize that this legislation will require adaptation and change on a very large scale. I'm very glad to see that the government heeded the concerns of many organizations about the short time limit before new regulations were imposed. By accepting the amendment put forward by members of the opposition to delay implementation until next January, you are at least giving these organizations the chance to get ready.

However, I think the granting of that delay is only the first step in helping medical professionals and organizations become prepared. There are two other key elements that must be present: continued consultation and amendment to resolve complex issues, such as the lockbox concept, and help with the sector in education and training. The six-month delay in implementing Bill 31 is not only important for the extra time it gives the sector to adapt to new rules, but it is also time needed to finish some of the details and find some compromises. I'm not about to go into the complexity of the lockbox issue, except to say that it is only one of some unresolved areas under this bill.

Another is the question of the regulatory powers granted the minister and the government by this legislation. This is an echo of the concerns we have heard about Bill 8. I would hope that the government is taking some lessons here about the dangers of pushing for new powers and of demanding more accountability without offering any in return. If you truly want the co-operation and active participation of people and organizations in a new way of doing things, you have to demonstrate mutual action and responsibility. Simply telling people what to do and demanding their co-operation because it is for their own goodwill will not suffice; in fact, it will likely backfire. You have to explain and show what you will be doing on your end of the bargain.

In a bill like this, where the regulatory powers are so broad, it is very important for the government to hold equally broad consultations. That means not only on the legislation, but on the regulations as well. Of course, it also means consultation which results in action, as well as listening and recognizing the concerns of stakeholders. This government must continue to be prepared to implement their suggestions.

I am concerned that this government appears to be blurring the lines between regulation and legislation. There are good reasons why we have two ways of granting authority for government action, and I think my friends across the floor need to remember this. The most important aspects of a law are supposed to be dealt with through legislation. That ensures that a government must bring its ideas before the Legislature for review by the representatives of the people. It's a simple core value of democracy. Regulations, on the other hand, are meant to deal with smaller, everyday aspects of the laws. They are meant to spare the entire Legislature the time and energy to debate non-controversial topics, or those that must be changed very frequently or very quickly. Regulations should not be used to make the fundamental changes in law, and each law should be written to prevent that from happening.

Unfortunately, in some cases, by accident or design, a law does not allow itself to be changed through regulation. That's very true when it comes to this bill, and to the new regulatory powers it grants. I would like to remind members opposite what the Ontario Medical Association had to say when it talked about the new regulatory powers under Bill 31. The OMA representative told the committee:

"I would like to note for this committee ... our concerns about the extensive regulation-making powers found in the bill. They are so wide-ranging that they allow the government to change virtually any aspect of the law by regulation. This is contrary to the traditional division of legislative and regulatory authority and represents an intrusion of the government's executive powers into the lawful powers of the Legislature. Not only does it create the power to completely undermine the content of the act, it undermines the democratic process of the Legislature. We recommend that this committee review the proposed regulatory-making powers closely with a view to significantly curtailing them."

I'm sure that, given this government's public record of speaking out so strongly in favour of open government and democratic responsibility, they would not wish to undermine democracy in the Legislature. I'm certain this government did not intend to take away from the democratic powers of the Legislature or to impose a non-democratic law on the people of Ontario. Certainly, the overpowering role of regulations in Bill 31 must have been the result of accident and not design. As a result, I look forward confidently to the further amendment of this bill to curtail the regulatory powers, as the OMA has quite rightly requested.

Yet another issue that demands more discussion before this bill is implemented is its impact on fundraising. I know there have been extensive amendments to the bill as a result of concerns raised in this area. However, I also know that many stakeholders continue to raise new ideas and questions about the legislation in this regard. I also know that this is an absolutely vital issue for hospitals and other organizations, and that we cannot be too careful in addressing their concerns.

I'm sure the Minister of Health does not need to be reminded of the rapidly mounting costs of the modern health care system, the impact of our aging population, the increasing demand for sophisticated diagnostics, treatments and preventatives, and the growing role that institutional fundraising has taken in meeting these challenges. Frankly, if it was not for the outstanding efforts of hospitals, foundations and other institutions across this province, we would not enjoy the high level of health care we have here in Ontario.

I can just note the hard work of the Royal Victoria Hospital foundation in my riding of Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford and also the Southlake Regional Health Centre in the southern part of my riding for the outstanding work they do with respect to foundation work to make sure that needed health care services do, in fact, come to the riding. I know that the foundation at RVH has done great work with respect to bringing about public awareness of cancer care in my riding with respect to the radiation treatment we're looking to come to Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, to ensure that my constituents don't have to go down to Toronto, to Sunnybrook or Princess Margaret Hospital. I know the Ministry of Health is working with RVH in a constructive and positive way to bring about that cancer care centre to Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford.

Whenever we see a new hospital being built, a new wing being added or an old wing being renovated, in almost every instance the money for this work is coming from fundraising efforts, not the government. Quite simply, taxpayer money is not there. There cannot possibly be enough to meet the demand.

Our government saw this coming many years ago. We recognized the mounting pressures on the system and introduced the idea of using private funds to pay for the bricks and mortar of new hospitals. I'm glad to note that the current government, despite all of their high-flown rhetoric on this subject, has seen the sense in allowing two hospitals to go forward using this common sense funding method. My friends opposite are even musing about building more hospitals this way, and why not?

The point is that this government must recognize that fundraising is not a luxury for our health care institutions, it is a necessity. It has become one of the cornerstones of the system and a method of meeting increased demand with limited public resources. Hospitals and others must be able to raise funds directly, and the most effective way they can do that is to appeal to former patients. Unreasonable limitations on health records that threaten the ability to raise funds are also a threat to the quality and availability of health care in this province. Without the ability to raise funds, our health care system will not be able to do its job, period.

1620

It is time to recognize the simple fact that government cannot meet the health care challenge alone. Public administration and funding of health care services are more than enough for the government to handle. You can't do that and come up with the money for all the bricks and mortar too. No government can. So it's vital that no

legislation impedes the ability of our hospitals and other institutions to be effective fundraisers and partners in health care.

I've mentioned three areas where ongoing work will be required: the lockbox, regulatory powers and fundraising. Those are the three major areas, but there are other points in this legislation that still need work. Just to cite a couple of examples, section 15 should be amended so that the health information custodian can delegate some duties to a contact person, and subsection 46(2) needs to be clarified so that a patient's chart is also protected from disclosure. There are several more points like this which were made in committee and brought to the attention of the minister and his staff.

In short, there's plenty of work still to be done before this act becomes a law of this province. I urge this government to make good use of the extra six months before Bill 31 kicks in. This is your opportunity to listen carefully, consult broadly and act as fairly as possible. Please take advantage of it.

Finally, I would like to bring up the question of education. Bill 31 will require a new, complex and important system of handling information. There will be yet another new normal in health care in Ontario. For this to happen efficiently and effectively, all the people and organizations involved must have a clear understanding of the law's requirements. There will need to be brochures, manuals, Web sites, seminars, staff training, consultations and more. As government is imposing these requirements on the health care system, it will only be fair that the government help to provide the resources needed, including educational materials and funding.

This is where that concept of mutual responsibility comes in. This is where accountability must become a two-way street. As much as I support the aims of this government in protecting the privacy of people's health care records, as much as I appreciate their co-operative attitude in reforming this bill and as much as this legislation builds on initiatives begun by us in government, the current government must take responsibility for its failure or success.

Whether or not Bill 31 meets its objectives in the resulting safety and security of confidential health care records will depend on the government's dedication to consulting, amending, supporting and funding their new system. I sincerely wish them luck in taking on this important task.

In closing, as I have a few minutes left, I just want to comment on a couple of things. I'm here in the Legislature this afternoon speaking on the bill, and quite frankly, I'm quite disappointed that I'm here specifically at this time. I was supposed to have a meeting with the Minister of Education's staff with respect to the closure of a school in my riding, the Prince of Wales Public School, on the chopping block with respect to the Simcoe County District School Board. I was supposed to be meeting today, but the meeting was cancelled by ministry staff at the last moment. I've been trying to get a meeting with that staff for weeks on end now. I'm very dis-

appointed that once again the Minister of Education has seen fit to make a member of this House almost unimportant, if not irrelevant, with respect to trying to represent the interests of their constituents in terms of a school closing when last fall he made the statement that school closings would be reviewed and would not happen until a full consultation had happened.

Trying to get a meeting with the Minister of Education is an exercise in—I wouldn't call it frustration, but I would say I'm at a dead end in trying to get a meeting. They say they're going to give me a meeting maybe next week, but we'll have to see. I'll be back next Monday speaking about that again—

Mr Dunlop: We won't be here next Monday.

Mr Tascona: That's true. Next Tuesday.

I also want to mention that I am very thankful to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Last week I spoke about birth certificates, and what did I get today? I was speaking about bulletin number 9 last week, and today I got bulletin number 10. I'm very appreciative to get that from the minister. I know he's working diligently with respect to birth certificates, but as I said last week, are we going to be getting up to bulletin number 30? The issue is, get this problem solved. I don't need to get bulletins. But I really do appreciate getting bulletin number 10. I guess number 11—we're going to get a weekly update. One can only hope this gets fixed. I know the minister is working hard. I certainly respect his good-faith efforts in this matter, but quite frankly, I can only handle so much paper in the office. We've got number 10, and I appreciate that. I got it today in the mail. I'm going to see what's in there.

On another matter before I close, I got a letter from the Toronto Association of Law Libraries, which states, "Over the past few months, a worrying trend on government Web sites has alarmed the law library community. Access to many documents such as press releases and government background papers has disappeared from ministry Web sites as new government ministers overhauled department Web sites." They want me to look into this, and I certainly will. Perhaps we'll have discussion at the Speaker's meeting this week.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Marchese: New Democrats support Bill 31. We stated some concerns. I wanted to state another one and wondered whether the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford has the same concern, and that's subsection 72(11). This section deals with the fact that the regulation-making process will now be an open process, and we think it's a good idea. But the concern that our member from Nickel Belt raised about it is that subsection (11) says that if the minister makes a decision that a regulation will not be part of a public process—ie, that it would just go to cabinet—there won't be notice and there won't be any ability for the public to participate. Here you have a regulation-making process that will be public, and we think it's good; then there is a section that says, "But the minister may decide that whatever he wants to deal with will go directly to cabinet," and as

such, there will be no oversight. So we thought, go the extra mile and make that process somewhat public as well.

So there are some concerns about this bill, which doesn't take away from the fact that we support it—unlike Bill 8, where even lawyer Michael Watts says he has a number of concerns. He says the following are concerns:

"(1) the shift of control from the voluntary board to the minister; and

"(2) the resulting increased likelihood of arbitrary political interference in the governance and management of the hospital operations....

"With the shift of control, our health care system will become less accountable, not more accountable, because the communities will eventually lose the advocacy voice that volunteer boards and their CEOs, to this day, have been able to provide for them."

I wondered whether the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford has a comment on subsection 72(11) and the other matter of Bill 8 that another lawyer raises. I wonder whether you could speak to both.

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I'm pleased to add some comments, particularly to the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. I tell you, on this side of the House we very much appreciated your early compliments in your opening address, although you must have felt that you were a little spurned by us because you weren't continuing to do that.

Clearly, though, any bill that is likely, potentially, to receive the support of all three parties in the House is one that should be hailed. That's a unique situation. Our compliments to those who have worked on this bill or related bills in the past in moving that agenda along. Certainly members opposite have been applauded for their efforts.

The bill really is obviously a lot about protecting the rights of individuals to their medical history, to protect the opportunities, so that their health care is their business where it's appropriate, and not shared with others. That's the essence of the bill. But I think it is going to present some interesting challenges nonetheless, and thus providing the timeline to the end of this year will be helpful for the agencies and organizations involved in getting themselves ready for when the bill does become law.

I want to talk very briefly in the few seconds left about one of those types of agencies: children's aid. They're going to face some very unique situations, particularly in light of the fact that they have to deal with a number of other agencies and organizations, not the least of which would include schools, potentially housing organizations, custody care organizations, the families of the young people involved, therapists and doctors, hospitals, the police. When you have to integrate all of the information that you might have on a young person and find out how you're going to be able have the ability to disseminate that to all of the various organizations that might want a piece or pieces of that, it will present some unique

challenges that I'm sure these organizations can meet, but it is going to take an awful lot of effort on their part.

1630

Mr O'Toole: With respect to the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, who as a practising lawyer knows much about how technical this bill is, I still raise his disappointment today with the Minister of Education and his staff failing to meet at a pre-arranged meeting on the closing of the Prince of Wales school in his community of Barrie. I know just how important fulfilling your promises can be. This could arguably be another broken promise.

In this bill, the three principal words with respect to personal information are "collecting," "using" and "disclosing." There's no question this is a controversial piece.

I think people have mentioned section 11. If you want to take a look at that, it's talking about the health information custodian; that's the person who keeps the record. If you look at section 11 and go on to section 12, you'll see just how sensitive—I'll just read a little section here, subsections 14(2) and (3):

"A health care practitioner may keep a record of personal information about an individual in another place as permitted under section 2"—which is the regulatory section that says, basically, in their home.

On the ability to change or correct a record, if there's some wrong information, very sensitive and personal health information, if we were government—perhaps it's a matter of style as opposed to substance. They criticized us, saying it was Big Brother encroaching on personal confidentiality. I know it is the right thing to do, and that's why I'm extending the hand of trust to the government in the hope that the professionals—and I know the professionals want to get this right—will connect up the nine modules of health information providers.

But I think if we keep an eye on it, there has to be some review period, and that to me is a process that's missing in this bill. I'll be speaking at some length about it afterwards, but there should be a customary review of complaints through the Ombudsman or that type of office. But, in general nature, I will be supporting the bill.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I paid rapt attention to the comments by the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. It was a riveting effort on his part that captivated my attention, and I found myself moved and excited by his analysis of Bill 31. It's rare that we have that kind of excitement generated in this Legislature, where members of all three caucuses feel compelled to focus in on an address like the one given by the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. So I relished this afternoon. It will be a part of my fond recollections of this place, as they say, for many years, long after I'm gone. I can't think of any other single event that has been so thoroughly etched in my memory as the speech by the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford.

In fact, I found myself having some concern about Bill 31, and with the thorough and exhaustive analysis by the

member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, I find myself even more reluctant to support the bill than I was initially. But at the end of the day, taking Ms Martel's say—so, it's something that New Democrats clearly are prepared to live with. New Democrats were constructively critical of this bill during the course of committee hearings, and of course Shelley Martel, bless her, from Nickel Belt, was an active and enthusiastic member of that committee. So I'm just grateful for the opportunity to have heard the address by the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, as I'm sure you are, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford has two minutes to reply.

Mr Tascona: I'm really touched by those comments by the member for Niagara Centre. I'd like to say I'm prepared to live with those comments.

I'd just like to say, on a more serious note, that the member from Trinity-Spadina, making his comments about subsection 72(11) of the act—the way it reads, it says, "No action, decision, failure to take action or failure to make a decision by the Lieutenant Governor in Council or the minister under this section shall be reviewed in any court or by the commissioner." So in essence, there's no review.

Mr O'Toole: The minister will have total authority.

Mr Tascona: Member from Durham, you've had the floor. I'll keep the floor for the moment.

Mr O'Toole: How about the Prince of Wales school?

Mr Tascona: Yes, we'll go back to the Prince of Wales school shortly.

That's a very interesting feature of this bill, and quite frankly, when you couple it with the power of temporary regulation, which I haven't seen too often in any bill, if at all, there are certainly broad powers here. I think it's probably a recognition by the government that this is going to be a very cumbersome bill to implement and maintain control over.

Certainly, the comments from the member from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge, with the children's aid society, should be noted, and obviously he'll be giving his input to his party on that. The member from Durham, with respect to a review period for complaints: certainly I think that's going to be great input that we need to have with respect to a bill of this magnitude, because when you look at it, it's just an incredibly lengthy bill—115 pages—with a lot of amendments in terms of the work that's gone into it. It's going to be a challenge for implementation. It's going to be a challenge in terms of how to balance the needs of foundations and organizations to do their fundraising, because let's face it, that's going to be the core to keep the system moving the way it should, and certainly a fundamental part of our system.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): At the outset, I'd like to notify you that I'll be sharing my time with the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

I want to begin by saying it's a pleasure to speak in favour of this bill, joining with my colleagues on all sides of the House. I think it's an important piece in this

government's new approach to health care, one that's based on co-operation, one that's based on working with stakeholders, and most importantly, it's about getting rid of the silos—to use a favourite term of the Minister of Health—that exist in our health care system.

During the recent election campaign, I'm sure I experienced the same as many other members when I heard many concerns about health care. Voters were concerned about doctor shortages, about long lines in the emergency rooms and just about the sustainability of the system, especially as our population gets older.

This government and, in particular, this new Minister of Health have made getting rid of these silos a big priority in addressing these concerns, because when you look at the way the system works right now and the way it's set up, oftentimes there seems to be competition between different aspects of the system, and the only way we're going to save it and the only way we're going to make it sustainable is by getting rid of these silos, getting rid of this competition and making sure that all these aspects of the health care system work together. I want to congratulate the minister for moving forward on this.

What's one of the ways we can get rid of these silos? The obvious answer is technology. It allows for the collection and dissemination of data in a way that we couldn't even have imagined a few years ago when we simply went to our family doctor, who held our files in a filing cabinet. In an increasingly busy and complex world, it's not uncommon for patients to visit different doctors, specialists and even different hospitals over the course of a short period of time. The ability to share information between health care officials is crucial to ensuring a patient's well-being.

At the same time, I would argue, it creates a tremendous challenge. Our ability to create electronic files and records with detailed information on a patient raises real questions about security, and I don't think anyone here in this Legislature could think of a more important category of information than an individual's health care file.

Doctors and other health care professionals will tell you that one of their top priorities is to keep any discussions with patients confidential. Some have even told me that they would use the analogy of a priest who's hearing a confession. So this bill is about doing this. It's about protecting this health care information.

What does the bill do specifically? Well, I would argue that it addresses a lack of clarity surrounding rules concerning health information. Right now in Ontario there's a lack of consistent rules covering what health information can be collected and how that information can be used and disclosed. Existing laws dealing with health information apply in some health care settings but not in others.

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This bill provides clear and consistent rules for the privacy and security of personal health information. It puts consistent rules in place that balance the need for health care providers to access sensitive medical information and also the rights of patients to protect their

privacy. Under this bill, Ontarians would have access to their personal health information and a right to require the correction of incorrect or incomplete information in their files.

What is good about this bill, and a number of people have spoken about it, is that it has been strengthened through the committee process. Although I don't sit on the committee, I understand that there were numerous delegations from health care providers and interested stakeholders who came forward and said, "How can we work with the government to make this a better bill?"

The committee has passed a number of key amendments which I feel strengthen the bill. Many stakeholders, for example, were concerned that the proposed July 1, 2004, time frame would not give them enough time to prepare for the legislation's coming into force. A number of members have mentioned in their comments how technical this bill would be and the challenges that all the health care providers will face. The committee has amended the bill, I'm pleased to say, to change the date to January 1, 2005, to give them the time to implement the legislation.

One area that was of particular concern, I understand, was that of fundraising. As members know, most hospitals have large and active foundations that raise funds. I have two hospitals in my riding: St Mary's hospital, which is located in the centre of my riding, and Grand River Hospital, which, although based on the border of a neighbouring riding, does have a facility in my riding. The foundations that are associated with these hospitals do amazing things, and I'd be remiss if I didn't mention how these two hospital foundations joined with the neighbouring Cambridge Memorial Hospital to create a fundraising campaign entitled One Voice, One Vision. Working together, this campaign has worked to address region-wide health care priorities at each individual hospital in the Waterloo region. At Grand River, they've concentrated on a new regional cancer centre; at St Mary's, on the new regional cardiac care centre; and at Cambridge Memorial Hospital, on enhanced mental health care services, among others.

As the members know, many hospital foundations contact former patients to seek funds. Under the original version of this bill, basic information would not be available to foundations without specifically asking patients. Amendments have been passed that would permit public hospitals to use and disclose limited personal information about a patient, obviously just name and contact information. I think this is an important step forward to address these fundraising concerns of many of the foundations. I applaud the amendment and feel that it strikes the appropriate balance.

Another issue that should be mentioned and put on the public record is research. Patient information is of course vital to medical research. In most cases, researchers don't need to know the specific identities of patients. Sometimes, though, information is needed that can't remain anonymous. They need to know about the specific background of patients in order to do the types of analyses

that are going to have a lot more background than would be done in an anonymous case. Patient consent can sometimes be impossible in this situation due to the large size of the research work that's being undertaken. In this situation, researchers, according to the bill, will have to go to a research ethics board to gain approval. I think all members would agree that this is an appropriate safeguard to make sure that this very sensitive, confidential information is protected.

In closing, I'd like to say that Bill 31 is an important piece of this government's health care policy, one that's intent upon blowing up these silos that I spoke about at the beginning, one that recognizes that technology is going to be a way for us to bring together hospitals, home care providers, people who are engaged in the administration of drugs and other health care providers. If we can get rid of these silos, if we can use technology so that we work together and do not enter into this ridiculous situation where at times we're competing, I think we're going to see a movement forward in our health care system.

This piece of legislation, Bill 31, provides consistent rules for the collection and use of personal health information, which I think will be welcomed by Ontarians, will be welcomed by patients. After much consultation, I believe that it has been strengthened by the committee through a series of amendments that I spoke about today. I think we have to applaud the members of the committee for the work they've done, for the fact that they've gone out. Much has been said about Bill 8, but I had a chance one day to sub in on the committee that was at that point looking at Bill 8. I guess what impressed me the most was the willingness of many of the health care providers and health care institutions to come forward. The Ontario Hospital Association, the Ontario Medical Association and individual hospitals put forward their concerns for the committee to engage in a dialogue with them and try to come out with what they felt was an appropriate response.

I don't believe that health care is necessarily a partisan issue. I don't believe it should be a partisan issue. I think that all of us want a strong, publicly funded accessible health care system. We have to move forward, we have to embrace these technologies, and something like Bill 31 provides the type of safeguard that's needed to ensure that our health care system will always remain one of the best in the world.

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I'd like to thank the member for Kitchener Centre for sharing his time with me as well. I am happy to stand here in support of Bill 31.

We live in a world where information exchange is very quick and very easy, sometimes almost too easy, and it makes many people very anxious about the privacy of the information that they have. We hear frequently about things such as identity theft and we learn how quickly and easily someone can access very important, very critical information of our own identities. We also are very conscious of our financial information. In an age

of computerization, we recognize that people have access to financial information that they normally wouldn't have been able to get. So we've become very conscious of privacy in that respect.

I think the discussion around Bill 31 has increased the public awareness of the issue of privacy around health information. Health information is uniquely sensitive and is intimately linked to the dignity of the patient. Patients in hospitals are particularly vulnerable. When you're visiting a doctor or a health care provider, you feel you're at their mercy and you trust them to treat your information with the utmost confidentiality. Most patients don't think about what's happening to their information at the time that they are seeking health care, but they do think about it after they leave the doctor's office or after they leave the hospital. So now we can say to people, with the proposed Bill 31, that they have assurances that there are strong and standardized rules for how health care information will be treated. Ontarians have a right to know how and when their health care information will be used.

I was also listening to previous speakers who mentioned issues about enforcement. The Information and Privacy Commissioner will be doing enforcement. The commissioner will be taking complaints, doing investigations and taking specific action so that if there's a complaint from a patient that their information has somehow been used inappropriately, there is recourse. Patients also now have a right to access their own records, and if they feel that there is incorrect information in their records, they have the right to request that it be corrected. It is often, for most patients, a question in their minds because they see doctors or health care providers walking about with a file and they're never really sure what's in that file. Now they have an opportunity to ask what's in their file, and if there's something in there that they feel is incorrect, they have the opportunity to ask for correction.

All of this applies to all health care providers, and I just want to list some of them. That includes doctors, health care practitioners, including nurse practitioners, hospitals, long-term-care facilities, health care clinics, laboratories, pharmacies, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care itself and others. But the bill also applies to others outside of health care, and that includes things such as insurance companies, employers and schools. Many people have been concerned about what happens to their health care information once it leaves their doctor's office. We've all had the experience of having a physical done in order to get insurance, and we wonder what happens to the information once the insurance company has access to it. Bill 31 will ensure that that information stays confidential. I welcome that to a great extent, because most of us have things in our files that we feel are personal, and we would like them to stay that way.

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One of the things the health care information custodian needs to do is inform patients when information

has been disclosed that is outside the written scope of the statement that the custodian will be giving to the patients when they first visit. Unless a patient requests otherwise, health care providers have the implied consent that allows them to give information to other health care providers. As was said earlier, many of us move from one health care provider to another, from our family doctors to surgeons, to nurse practitioners. Information flows back and forth to a great extent, so it is difficult for health care providers to ask for ongoing consent. The implied consent is an important part of what Bill 31 will do. But if those health care providers give that information to anyone who is not a health care provider, express permission must be obtained from the patients, and that's an important thing too. We want to make sure that the information stays within the circle of care, that it doesn't go beyond that without our knowledge and express permission.

There is still always the concern about what happens in a situation where there is reportable or communicable disease. Under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, health care providers are still required to report incidents of reportable and communicable diseases to their local medical officer of health.

One of the things that I have experienced in terms of the amendments that we have gone through in Bill 31 actually relates to foundations. I know that many have spoken to that whole issue of fundraising and the impact of Bill 31 on fundraising for foundations. I want to thank the Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital Foundation for making a presentation to the standing committee when it travelled to London. I have had the honour of being a member of that foundation and I understand only too well the difficulties that small and rural hospitals experience when they are trying to raise monies. We don't have the corporate headquarters that we can go to try to solicit funds and so, therefore, we need to deal very extensively with our information in terms of grateful patients. Patients who have had a positive outcome with their stay at the hospital often look for ways to express their gratitude. Under this bill, the foundation will have access to name and contact information. Quite frankly, that's all foundations are looking for. That's all they need. Once they've made that initial contact, the patient has the opportunity to let the foundation know that they no longer want to hear from them, or, what is more often the case, they will continue to be ongoing donors. They will make donations year after year, because they remembered a good stay with their local hospital.

I also want to speak to the issue of enforcement. As I said earlier, the Information and Privacy Commissioner will be doing the enforcement and the follow-up to complaints on this whole thing. There is also the issue of penalties. We wanted to make sure, under this bill, that people had the opportunity and were told very specifically that violations of the bill would be followed by strong penalties. The penalties include things such as a \$50,000 fine for individuals or a \$250,000 fine for organizations who violate the bill. This is very important,

because people need the assurance that if their information is given out, there is some recourse to them and that there are also repercussions to the individuals who gave out that information.

I'd also like to speak to the issue of the lockbox. Individuals and patients have a right to be able to control what information is given out. Under Bill 31, they have that provision. They can very specifically let a health care provider know that they do not want certain information disclosed.

There was some concern expressed during the hearings about what would happen to other health care providers, who would get that information and that there was information missing from the file. Under Bill 31, the person who was transferring the information can let it be known that the file is incomplete. That allows a subsequent health care provider to know that something is wrong and that they need to either ask the individual about what information it is or proceed without that full information and disclosure. This allows those individuals to work without liability, because they will be working in good faith and in a reasonable fashion.

As a new MPP, I have to say that my experience with the Bill 31 hearings was very positive. I'm looking forward to moving forward with this very positive change.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I appreciate the comments of the member from Kitchener Centre and also from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. It's certainly rare to have this kind of unanimity on a particular piece of legislation. Certainly the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has a very good understanding of the bill and the hearings that went into seeing those amendments made. In balance, we are supporting that bill. While it's not perfect—there are some things that could be improved—at the end of the day, we accept that it's a piece of legislation that most of the stakeholders have indicated that they're satisfied with the amendments that have been made.

I wish that the government would be as co-operative when it comes to some of the issues affecting rural Ontario, ridings like mine, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, such as the hydro rate increase and how it's going to affect seniors and small business in my riding in Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

I received a letter from a gentleman up in Deux-Rivières about how that hydro rate increase which the government is characterizing as a 6% to 8% increase in fact is more like a 25% increase. Small business has been hit with so many different burdens since this government took office—new taxes and new ways of getting into their pockets—that they're having difficulty as it is. If this government continues to proceed in that vein—and now we've got environmental legislation that is going to hurt tourist operators in my riding on water issues—we just don't know where we're going to end up next.

Mr Marchese: There's really very little to disagree with the members from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and Kitchener Centre on with respect to the remarks they

made, because New Democrats agree largely with the bill, largely with what they've said. Mercifully, they've fixed some of the problems connected to fundraising, because if they hadn't—the committee, including all three political parties—it would have meant the loss of millions and millions of dollars. Thank you for solving that one collectively.

We do have some concerns, and we stated them. One of them has to do with the costs of compliance. For a lot of groups, this is going to be very, very difficult. We believe the member from Don Valley West, that they understand the difficulty. The question is always in the implementation and whether the money will flow. We raised concerns around section 72, where again the government does something that is very good and makes the regulation process open. That is laudable because rarely did we ever see anything like that in the previous regime. So that was good. But simultaneously, the minister can decide that a certain regulation will not be part of the public process and, if he or she decides that, then it doesn't become part of the public process. So on the one hand, public process, except when the minister decides it isn't.

1700

In spite of these concerns, New Democrats are supporting Bill 31, unlike Bill 8, where even folks like Miss Janet Kasperski, the executive director of the Ontario College of Family Physicians, says, "The preamble" to Bill 8 "gives lip service to primary health care, but the bill is silent on how primary health care will be strengthened." She also says:

"We read Bill 8 with a heavy heart. This bill is aimed at provider accountabilities but is silent on government and public accountabilities. It is hard to read the various sections in the act without feeling that once again providers are left with all the accountabilities and none of the supports needed to meet those accountabilities."

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): It's a pleasure to be able to speak to this bill, and I want to commend the members from Kitchener Centre and Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for speaking eloquently to this bill. It is not often I've seen in the past where we actually had a bill with amendments. It speaks to a better democratic process, a better participation by the stakeholders, and consultation and co-operation. In the end, you get legislation that is meant to ameliorate the situation in the province.

This bill has a number of sections that balance the sharing of information with respecting privacy. The first part sets out the purposes of the act, of course, and provides definitions and rules, because as we move forward with our technology, we need to set those parameters in place. Part II sets out the duties of the health information custodians with respect to professional health information. Part III sets out rules concerning consent to the collecting and use and disclosure of personal health information. Under part IV, no health information custodian is permitted to collect, use or disclose personal health information about an individual

without that person's consent. Part V provides that an individual is entitled to access to a record of personal health information, so you can access it.

So this bill basically provides the needed balance as we move forward with modern technology and are able to use that technology more effectively in the health system.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): It's a pleasure to rise to comment on some of the comments here. I happened to be one of the members of the committee, and it was very good the way Mr Lalonde handled the committee happenings. Some areas were a bit concerning, though. I think that the sharing of information is very good in the ordering of tests. I know a lot of individuals coming forward who go through the emergency room process and then go back to their regular doctor have difficulty utilizing the same test information and ensuring it's what individuals need. I think that will help the system quite a bit.

I was happy to hear we were able to get the delay in the implementation. As the member from the third party mentioned, the cost to a number of groups and organizations is yet undefined. There are certain groups, such as the dental hygienists, who hadn't taken into consideration how it would impact them, how they would take care of that and the storage of that information. Once the information comes in, where is it to be stored and how is it centrally stored?

I think there possibly could be an aspect of a new business being developed for information or medical or health care professionals who would be able to provide secure services and lockbox services for agencies and groups and organizations to make sure that, whether it's the physiotherapists or acupuncturists or dental hygienists, they would have a place where they would be able to make sure their information is secure.

Also, I think the ability to see your own records is very important, to make sure they are correct. I know I've had some problems in the past personally with that, where there would be a misdiagnosis or showing up for the wrong tests at the wrong time. So I think that's important as well. I think the one thing—I know my time is limited—is the fact that we have all-party agreement on that, and if that's the case, then let's get on with the vote.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has two minutes to reply.

Mrs Van Bommel: I want to thank the members for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Trinity-Spadina, Sarnia-Lambton, and Oshawa for contributing to the discussion. One of the nice things about speaking to Bill 31 is that there is general consensus on this issue. Certainly that has made it a very encouraging process for a rookie like myself to be going through this. One of the things I noticed was that, as a government, we are now going out and doing public consultations, not just here at Queen's Park but throughout the province. In doing that, I learned a great deal from the people who presented themselves at these hearings. There were issues that I hadn't thought

about until we went out to the hearings and heard from the stakeholders about how this bill would impact upon them. I appreciate their participation.

The members for Trinity-Spadina and Oshawa mentioned the costs of implementation and the costs of compliance. We certainly as a government recognize that there are going to be costs associated with this particular bill, but quite frankly, and as is indicated by the fact that we're in agreement that this is a necessary bill, anything that is worth doing is sometimes going to cost some money to do. I think we need to move forward and do just that.

Privacy is a deeply personal issue for all Ontarians. Earlier, someone mentioned Big Brother—

Interjection.

Mrs Van Bommel: —or Big Sister. This bill is one way we can ensure that Ontarians have privacy, that there is not going to be Big Brother looking over their shoulder and having knowledge. If they feel there is, they are given recourse under this bill to make sure that it doesn't happen.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr O'Toole: I'd like to rise this afternoon and address this very important bill, Bill 31. As I said in one of my earlier remarks when the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford was speaking, I gave some indication, not taking personal credit for anything, that I did have the privilege of working with one of the drafters of the early health care privacy debate, Gilbert Sharpe. Gilbert Sharpe, as I said earlier, was the author, the drafter, the legislative counsel who drafted many of the bills that dealt with the Mental Health Act, and we did consult broadly.

I just want to read through a small bit of history for those viewing and for the new members here. This bill, in fact the whole concept, is not new. This whole health privacy debate has been on the legislative table for almost a decade. In fairness, I think that's why, for newer members specifically, you've worn us out in terms of our ability to resist any longer, because this has been around since the late 1970s.

I'm going to give you that recorded history. In 1989, the Peterson government's Ministry of Health formally recognized the need to integrate the health system with ministry information technology in their strategic plan for health.

The next milestone, for the record here, was in 1990, introducing the change in Ontario health card systems, from family- to individual-based. That was all part of preparing the landscape, if you will, providing access to consolidated health information.

In 1992, the NDP government established the Ontario drug benefit program, integrating information, as we all know, through the pharmacists. In 1994, another NDP initiative, the Ontario Health Providers Alliance, OHPA, which some of you may be familiar with, created an information technology committee. In 1995 we were elected, the Mike Harris government was elected. The government of Ontario declared that it would replace

Ontario's outdated health information system with a smart system integrated across the province.

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So really, that was the genesis, if you will, of the necessity to build the IT infrastructure and put in place some of the infrastructure connecting up all of the health care providers, which I'll speak more on shortly.

The evolution to Smart Systems paper was published in 1995. That's indeed where I first became engaged. I should say for the viewers that most of my background working with General Motors was in the information sector, first as a programmer and latterly as sort of a manager. All things today basically are integrated systems.

In 1996, the Harris government accepted the Smart Systems vision and the program management office accepted the concept, and the concept was then established. In 1996, the interim program management office was staffed by all three partners—the OHPA, that's the professions; the Information Technology Association of Canada, ITAC; and the Ministry of Health. In 1997, Smart Systems developed a plan and it was approved. In 1997, the program management office was set up and equipped. In 1997, Smart Systems for Health worked through stages of strategic plans to build and, in 2001, deploy an Internet-based solution for six e-health initiatives to permit secure sharing of health information among providers. The trusted third party infrastructure, which focused on a public interest framework, remained the guiding principle.

Again, all through this was the anxiety that the information that was being shared—the three principles that were discussed, and probably still are, are informed consent, implied consent—that is, the patient, if you will, giving consent, and we could get into a whole litany of concerns there. If the person enters the hospital on a stretcher, is that implied or informed consent? It's a hugely complex issue in terms of protecting the individual's right to privacy.

In 2001, the business plan for Smart Systems for Health was approved by the government. In fact, I should tell you, if you look at the public accounts, you'll see there have been literally billions of dollars spent building the infrastructure now referred to very commonly as Smart Systems for Health.

In 2002, regulations to establish the agency to which I've just referred; in 2002, the chair and board of directors. In fact, I had the privilege of bringing greetings from the minister, Minister Clement at the time, to the inaugural meeting of the board of Smart Systems. It's not to compliment any involvement. We all have the privilege of being here and the privilege that role brings with being informed by experts. I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge some of the experts whom I believe it was a privilege to work with. I have mentioned Gilbert Sharpe, who, as I said before, helped me during the consultations. But another guy I met, another Ministry of Health person whom I have a lot of respect for, is Michael Connolly, who is interim chief executive officer for Smart Systems

for Health. They've just published this booklet, "From Ideas To Reality: Smart Systems for Health Agency, 2003 Report." It's a pretty decent, very objective outline of the goals and objectives of the infrastructure side.

Building the infrastructure, that's the hardware, primarily, and application software, is absolutely necessary to connect up the modules of health care. Bill 31 doesn't deal with this specifically, but this is why they need the health privacy legislation, which allows or facilitates the sharing of information. Then I talked about the system side of it and the application side of it, and I'll get into a little bit more of that. If you look through and you want to know who is sharing the data—and it's everything from the health care provider; that's the doctor, the pharmacist—in fact, any regulated health profession can be connected to the system. The labs of Ontario are connected to the system under a system called OLIS, the Ontario Laboratory Information System.

There's no magic here. Most of these modules are up and running today. In fact, there are six modules that we had actually working and connecting and sharing that information. I'm just going to list a couple of those because it's important to see the reality of what I'm talking about.

In the few moments here, the initiatives that I talked about—I had a real privilege during my term as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health—and from all the experts, from doctors to front-line nursing professionals like Doris Grinspun and people working with the community care access centres—they kept me informed. In fact, it certainly lessened my concern about privacy of information. I hope we can go slowly and solve it, and some of Bill 31 allows me to have that confidence.

But the six initiatives that the people of Ontario should know about are absolutely critical. In fact, they're common to what our government was doing, and the now government, the Liberal government, will continue to do. I commend them for imitating or copying all of the initiatives that we started, because really, let's be honest, these initiatives start with the people who actually run things, who are the permanent staff within the Ministry of Health and other ministries.

The first project was the Ontario family health networks, and the e-physician project. I had the privilege of visiting the first pilot project with Dr Gamble. Dr Gamble was kind enough to allow us into his office to see how he used the new wireless tablet, which allowed him to record, very simply, patient information while discussing it with the patient. That data would be collected on a little laptop computer and that information could be shared wirelessly with his server and the server, with his permission, could be uploaded to the main custodian, which would be the databank managed and administered by Smart Systems.

The issue that will come up latterly in my comments will be the systems and systems integration and systems security. These are really the essence of the question.

But community care access centres, which was called Community Care Connect or the C3 project, that project

connected the 43 community care access centres, which set up basically community care, home care, home supports. That system, with 42 offices, is up and running in all regards.

Again, you have to realize that that was part of the almost \$28 billion we were spending in health care. All of them were important investments to provide the platform where we are today, because everyone knows—and it has been said by previous speakers. Respectfully, the earlier speakers from Don Valley West etc did acknowledge that times have changed, and information-sharing and information technology should make for better patient access, more consistent and comprehensive information for the health provider. The health provider should have the record in front of them, wherever they are in Ontario.

The third project I witnessed was integrated services for children. The children's information system is already up and running. Some of the government members who are doctors would know that this system is important for integrating children's services, whether it's learning difficulties or just physical problems, and is probably the leader in health services right here in Toronto.

Number four is the Ontario Laboratory Information System, which I talked about before, where all the labs of Ontario, whether it's operated by MDS or others, have the ability to make information digital and transfer that information to be part of the patient record.

The fifth system was the health network system. The health network system is modernizing and managing private networks in access sharing. That's probably the big point where I would depart: access. Who has access to what information? Access to information is really what this bill's about. Should every anaesthetist have access to your full record? Should every psychologist or psychiatrist or general surgeon or the nurse at the nursing station have access to the entire record of everything about you and your life?

This really becomes a huge decision of layering access security rules. I have some knowledge of this, having worked in systems access security, which is like a maze. It's the metrics of who gets in based on their level of security clearance. It's very complicated. It isn't for those working in it. But to explain it, it just means not all people can see all the record. That's the simplest definition.

The HIV information project sharing is a good example that is up and running today. It's an IT system to improve treatment and care and outcomes for Ontarians living with HIV.

That's only six of the modules. There are nine actually which at the end of time will connect up long-term care, doctors' offices right to children's hospitals—so all levels, all ages and all needs. I can log on—and that becomes the issue in practical terms—or scan your health card and, bingo, up comes the data. It's incredible. You talk about Yahoo and some of these search engines; this is a profound piece of current technology that is going to allow the attending health care provider, under certain

security levels, to access information: what drugs you're on, what general surgery you've had, what medications could be in conflict. Some of the newer doctors will be very comfortable with this, but some people who are just not comfortable with systems will probably have a little problem.

1720

I'm going to slip to Bill 31 because, as I said, Bill 31 has three elementary pieces to it: permission to collect the data, to use the data, and then to disclose the data.

If you talk to the new federal health council, they're going to do baseline studies. They're going to know what the outcomes for treatment for certain medications are in Ontario, Quebec and other places. They're going to do research based on information—outcomes, hopefully.

I guess the point here is, what if I say I don't want to be involved in a baseline study? What if I say I don't want people to know that I have a certain blood type or I've had certain tests that reveal certain things about my particular blood profile? This is where the thing, in practical application terms, becomes problematic.

I'm going to read a couple of sections that are specific to Bill 31, and with what I've given you as background and what I'm giving you as a current application instance, you're going to find that this becomes somewhat more challenging than just everyone's smug and happy agreement with Bill 31. We've talked about it, and I know we need it to make it work. My advice to the minister is: Go slowly, very, very slowly.

Some of the information here is that if individuals do not wish to participate, they should be allowed to withdraw from the information base. They might be exposing themselves to some risk, because if you're in an automobile accident or some situation where you have a stroke or whatever, you may want to be off the database but you might wish you had been on it, because you could be on a medication that the attending physician at the automobile accident situation may not know about and needs to know to intervene appropriately.

Section 11 gives you some questions to ask. The point that I think is important is to always monitor government activity, whoever is government. I'll read section 11 for you—this is under the subsection on accuracy:

"A health information custodian that uses personal health information about an individual shall take reasonable steps," whatever that means, "to ensure that information is as accurate, complete and up-to-date as is necessary," whatever that means, "for the purposes for which it uses the information."

Fairly vague: "as accurate and up-to-date" as possible.

Subsection (2):

"A health information custodian that discloses personal health information about an individual shall:

"(a) take reasonable steps to ensure that the information is as accurate, complete and up-to-date as is necessary for the purposes of disclosure that are known to the custodian at the time of the disclosure."

The point I'm making, first of all, is that the patient is first. In my view, they should be informed of what is on

the record, have the right to edit what's on the record and indeed change what's on the record, or, as has been said earlier, have some information put in a lockbox at their discretion.

You should know that there's a long history with this whole debate, this whole policy. It's actually been to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court has ruled, technically, that the health care professional actually owns the physical record—here's all the scoop. The patient owns the information. If you've been to a doctor and tried to acquire some of that information, you might find that maybe you can't read it or maybe it isn't accessible. It might vary.

How secure? I wouldn't want to leave the viewer today thinking that information today is absolutely secure. In fact, if you want to know where your health information is today, and you and your family have been attending with a family physician for many years, if you are so disposed—and I do not recommend or support this—you could go into the office, and if your name ended with a "W," you could go to the bottom right-hand drawer of the filing cabinet, pull it open, reach in and pull out the "W" file. That's how secure it is. It's not like you need some security access to get into it. You might have to do something untoward, but that's how secure it is today.

In fact, I would say to you that if we begin this discussion by presuming today's system is ultimately secure, I put to you that it really isn't. The information I've tried to present today is that we need to integrate, we need to give patients their rights first and we need to make sure there are levels of security for access to the custodian, and the patient always comes first.

But I think there are other sections in here—and I'm not trying to cast any aspersions on the bill. I do commend Minister Smitherman for listening. There's a huge number of amendments, thank goodness—and move slowly. I don't think we should be in a rush to solve this. As we begin to invest in computers, I hope there's no loss of investment in people, because computers, as we all know, and systems are going to take up a powerful lot of administrative IT money, both administering the hardware and the software. These are big money suckers, let me tell you. I worked in it for years, and this technology solution: Every computer is outdated the moment you buy it.

This stuff here could integrate the MRI record right on to the digital storage. There's no transfer; it's all digitally transferred automatically, uploaded at night. The lab technician results, all the tests, pharmaceuticals, all of it can be integrated and available instantly.

Who's going to be screening and editing those thousands of the 12 million people in Ontario? There are many unanswered questions. My advice, I repeat, is that you have to go slowly and implement one application at a time, review it with the people of Ontario and build up confidence. As you move forward, the system will work, it will give us more comprehensive case management for health care, but I believe the most important thing is

making sure that we get it right before the people of Ontario lose confidence and the investment will be for naught. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Kormos: As you know, I've got just a couple of minutes now to respond, to compliment, if I choose—I'm not going to—to speak well of his contribution to the debate. I haven't got enough time. I just want to let folks know I'm going to be speaking to this in my own right in around 20 minutes' time. I've got a couple of areas in the bill.

Look, New Democrats are going to support the bill. Are we overjoyed and are we ecstatic? No. The bill is problematic, and I'm going to point out a couple of the areas where I join our critic, Ms Martel, in letting you know where the problems are. It's regrettable that the government doesn't see fit to make this bill the bill it could have been, because everybody agrees in principle with the bill. You know what I'm saying, Ms Mossop?

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: That's right. But again, for everybody to have agreed in principle with the bill, and for the government to have sloppily, negligently allowed—you'd think there was almost a cover-up in the way the government allowed—the nasty little business; nasty little pieces cover up the negligence on the government's part in leaving in the bill what I presume were some serious oversights, unless the government is trying to cover up the inadvertence or the negligent inadvertence of either the drafters of the bill or perhaps their own policy people.

So, lo and behold, a cover-up? I'm not sure, but I do say that I'll be speaking to it in a couple of areas: (1) around the ability of especially volunteer organizations that are involved in the health care sector in costing and affording the technology that's going to be required of them; (2) this faith in the technology—I know that Mr O'Toole has this faith in technology that I don't necessarily share; and (3) the extent to which health care providers, hospitals, are allowed to give out information as indicated in subsection 37(3), as I recall.

1730

Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I am addressing the member for Niagara Centre. This bill is nothing but open and transparent. It was a great pleasure to be able to join the committee as it travelled around the province and meet with so many stakeholders, as they just improved this bill and made it so much better. Although, from the opposition's point of view, many of them did not want to travel around the province, did not want to consult with the people of Ontario, what's keeping us going in the right direction as a government is that we listen to 12 million Ontarians and work for 12 million Ontarians.

This bill was about being democratic, being parliamentary, using the committee the way it's supposed to be used, unlike the previous government, which wanted to do things behind closed doors and delivered their budget in the Magna plant. It was very difficult for Ontarians to trust such a government. But trust is the foundation of

this bill. That's why it is working for the people of Ontario and that's why we have come here together to make sure that it works. We're making sure that the rules are consistent when it comes to personal health information, the way it's collected and how that information is used, disclosed and distributed.

Amendments have been made, yes, but this bill has brought in measures to transform our health care system: things like the lockbox, making sure that the individual, the patient, the customer has the right to lockbox, to enclose information that they do not want disclosed to anybody else.

Once again, this bill is a great bill, and I look forward to it becoming the next act.

Mr Yakabuski: I want to thank my colleague the member from Durham for his measured and wise comments on the bill. He has a great deal of experience in the technology field, so we'd be wise to listen to his sage advice on this and any other pieces of legislation that come before this chamber.

The member for Mississauga East wanted to talk about the government's commitment to openness and transparency—I find that kind of odd, considering what's been going on in the House in the last couple of weeks—when it suits this government.

This bill, as the member for Durham indicated, had its genesis in previous governments, so a lot of work had been done in this regard in the past. This government did a good job of bringing back the bill to the House so that we could fine-tune it, make the final amendments and have a piece of legislation that, I might add, is not working yet because it has not been enacted, contrary to what the member for Mississauga East says. But I believe it will work, and the stakeholders will be watching to see how it does work and if there are any other changes that will be necessary down the road.

Getting back to the government's commitment to openness and transparency, I take it from the member for Mississauga East that we're going to have a new epiphany happening over there, that there's going to be an awakening. They're going to understand that the people of Ontario do want openness and transparency, and maybe the government is going to reinvent the commitment that they swore they'd uphold in their election campaign. We're looking forward to that, this new openness and transparency on the part of the government.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): As I look at my watch, I know it's sundown, so I wish to offer my respect in honour of Passover at this time, just to offer the people who are watching and the people in the House who have that in their hearts my best wishes on Passover.

I would also suggest that I believe there's an anniversary—that could be corrected—of the Sikh holy scriptures being presented as well. I would like to make comment about that, just to say thank you, and in the near future, a holy and happy Easter to everyone.

When we talk about a bill like this, I think what's important to say is that we do have agreement. Contrary to some of the comments that we hear in this House from

time to time, in terms of the theatrics that are expected of us, and also the party line, I would suggest very strongly that we are working collectively on this particular piece of legislation for the betterment of the people of Ontario.

In terms of their privacy, modern-day technology has become an important part of our society; it has become an important part of our society for the good. Obviously, whenever there's something that's designed for the benefit of all, there are people who know how to take advantage and use it for the bad. So I would suggest to you that the people in this place today are speaking for the good.

There have been some recommendations. There have been hearings. There have been people stepping forward. There have been members from the opposition suggesting clearly that there are ways to improve the bill, and that's great news. But I would suggest to you very clearly that no matter who wants to talk about who gets credit for whatever direction is headed in this bill, respectfully, let's not be the rooster taking credit for the rising of the sun. So the reality that we must be remembering here is that we're working toward the legislation that's going to improve the lot of the people of the province of Ontario, particularly those who are vulnerable to abuses inside a system that requires us to ensure that their information—because we know the bad has taken place—that it's done right. So my congratulations to all for the hard work that they've done.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Durham has two minutes to reply.

Mr O'Toole: Just to comment on each, I do want to thank the member for Niagara Centre. He did speak about a very important contributing group, the volunteers. Bill 8 speaks to the volunteers. It actually eliminates them.

Actually, the Canadian Institute for Health Information is another concerned constituent whom I would advise you to speak with.

The member for Mississauga East—basically, his patronizing kind of diatribe of broken promises doesn't deserve a response.

The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke had most of what I had to say.

The member for Brant had a very comprehensive, inclusive response, which is completely acceptable to us—and understandable as well.

I just want to mention one more section. In the preamble, it would be important for members opposite—those who may not have read the bill; there could be some here—it's in part VIII. In fact, you should read it. Part VIII, number 4 in the preamble says, "The schedule amends the Mental Health Act to allow the officer in charge of a psychiatric facility to collect, use and disclose personal health information about a patient, with or without the patient's consent, for the purposes of examining, assessing, observing or detaining the patient in accordance with the act or complying with an order or disposition made pursuant to the" act. So I think if you read the detail in application, theoretically I agree 100%

with personal health information and the integration. I'm going to repeat very deliberately, having worked for many years in the systems side, get it right. Go slowly. There are a lot of permissions.

I'm going to put one more thing before you. If I'm a patient—or, as the member for Mississauga East discouragingly said, a "client" or a "customer." I think "patient" is the proper term—and the patient believes there's a record or a piece of the record they don't know about that's on there, what assurance do I have from the minister that that information will be corrected without a bunch of red tape and litigation?

Thank you for the time to speak on this important bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Kormos: Oh, I should mention that I'm so pleased because here I am, and my neighbour, Khalil Ramal, who represents London-Fanshawe, was in his constituency office, as he should be Friday after he got home from his exhausting week here at Queen's Park, and one of his constituents, Scott Thompson, was visiting him in his office. Mr Thompson was dealing with a constituency matter with Mr Ramal, and Scott Thompson gave Mr Ramal my own—it's got my name inscribed on it—NDP yo-yo. Now, that could well be a political statement from somebody who's not a fan of the New Democratic Party, because I've been inclined to refer to people and institutions as yo-yos myself. I want to thank Mr Ramal for bringing this over to Queen's Park, and I want to thank Scott Thompson for his thoughtfulness. It's a hand-made sort of item and it's a really clever sort of thing, and I thank him. I just thank him for thinking of that. Lord knows he's not watching this afternoon, because anybody who was watching clicked off around an hour and a half ago.

1740

Mr O'Toole: Oh, come on.

Mr Kormos: Well, not while you were speaking, John; while people before you were speaking. Nobody got a chance to click off while John O'Toole was speaking—they would have.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: That's right. There are a whole lot of Ontario families that burned out the batteries on the remote control this afternoon, just trying to get through to the Queen's Park channel.

I want to thank Scott Thompson. I hope my friend Mr Ramal will take the transcript back to Scott Thompson and say thank you. I know everybody else is very envious, green with envy. They are; they're all green with envy, Mr Thompson. I can see them turning green before my eyes because they didn't get a personalized yo-yo from you. So I thank you for that very much.

Ms Martel, the member from Nickel Belt, spent a whole lot of time on this committee. I've already indicated during those two-minute interventions that the New Democrats are going to support this, because in principle it's sound.

Three things, I suppose. First of all is this still ongoing fascination with technology. Please, I'm not the Luddite

that some would have me appear, that I perhaps would misrepresent myself as. There, I said it: "misrepresent." It's sort of like "cover-up," isn't it? I remember, and some of you weren't here yet, the whole folly of the last government with the integrated justice system, the computerization in the justice system. Millions upon millions of dollars spent—misspent, blown—on computer software. Private sector partners, of course—bank robbers that they are—laughing all the way to the bank with taxpayers' money.

Mr Levac remembers that. The probation/parole offices still couldn't overcome the most fundamental security controls over accessing desktop PC kinds of computers. It was just incredible. So I have to tell you, I have some real caveats about this reliance upon computerized record keeping and maintaining any semblance of integrity of the record.

Two things are particularly dangerous, and I raised these at the onset of the integrated justice program—a total failure and an extremely costly one: (1) the integrity of the information and (2) the security of it. Two very different things.

Some of you folks have kids or grandkids who can hack their way—and have—into some pretty high-level and supposedly pretty secure computer records systems. The tales are notorious. Before we can even consider legislation like this having a meaningful impact, we have to be concerned about ensuring that the investment in technology is there so as to secure the information and to maintain its integrity. I suppose the only thing that could be considered worse than somebody accessing private information would be somebody accessing it and altering it. Do you understand what I'm saying? Either deleting information or in fact tweaking it, changing it, altering it.

So I've got to tell you, I remain incredibly apprehensive about these sorts of systems. The errors range from low tech—it was a couple of years ago that Marilyn Churley and I dealt with one of her constituents who had received somebody else's OHIP records because of the billing process—low-tech sloppiness, slovenliness in errors—out of OHIP offices, had received other people's medical records. Again, the sadness around it is that her constituent was a young man who had HIV and his records that somebody else received reflected the diagnosis and the treatment that was being undergone for his HIV status. That was a low-tech foul-up. The prospect, the potential, for high-tech foul-ups is significant.

A couple of things struck me, things of course that Ms Martel raised but that she has certainly impressed upon me. One is subsection 37(3). For the life of me, I'd like to hear an explanation from some of the government members who are not prepared to accept this bill as being the yet imperfect bill that it is, why the legislation would permit disclosure, and these are the three things: confirmation that an individual is a patient or a resident in a health care facility; the individual's general health status, and mind you, it indicates that it's restricted to identifying the health status as critical, poor, stable, satisfactory or in terms indicating similar conditions; and the

location of the individual in that facility, especially when representations were made to the committee by organizations like the Canadian Mental Health Association. Obviously, their interests are with respect to persons having mental illnesses or similar disorders, diseases or conditions.

You see, the onus is upon the patient to say, "I don't want this information divulged." The solution for me is just to reverse where the onus lies. The onus should be upon the patient to say, "Yes, I authorize this institution to divulge this information about me." It would be so simple. Somebody calls the switchboard, and the switchboard says, "Oh, let me check. No, sorry, we can't confirm whether or not that person is even a patient here." End of story.

Again, the Canadian Mental Health Association focused on persons with mental illness in hospitals, presumably where they're being treated for mental illness. What if the capacity of that person isn't such that they can meaningfully say, "Don't divulge my presence here"? As members of the committee have been wont to note, the stigma that attaches to any number of diseases, conditions, disorders—two that jump out, I suppose, in this particular climate are HIV/AIDS and mental illness. Sadly, regrettably—quite frankly, for good reason, because of the way that any number of employers, among others, deal with mental illness. There's a stigma attached to it.

I really am interested in understanding why this bill couldn't have been amended so that subsection 37(3) would require that the institution in which a person was a patient or a resident receive that patient's or resident's approval, permission, to divulge that information; if they didn't, that would deal with the cases where the person was either too distracted, just simply didn't address their mind to it—heck, the last time I was in a hospital as a patient I was three years old or something. But people who go into hospitals are distracted. People are thinking about other things than the prospect of somebody calling and making inquiries about their condition.

So I put to you, here we are at second reading. There's still a chance for the government—it would be delightful to put this into the committee of the whole House, wouldn't it? It would be. I've always enjoyed committee of the whole House. There's still a chance for the government to move amendments. I really would applaud this government, were it to amend subsection 37(3). It seems to me a much healthier, a much more consistent approach if in fact this is about the protection of privacy.

Heck, if you go to a half-decent hotel, they're not going to give information about where your room is. You've got somebody staying over at the Courtyard Marriott, a unionized hotel, or over at Sutton Place, another unionized hotel here in town—they are; they're both unionized hotels, and I urge people to patronize places that have unionized workers working in them. But if you call and want so-and-so, they're not going to tell you what the room number is. But here, under this legislation, the hospital is actually authorized to disclose

the location of the patient or resident in that hospital or institution, admittedly unless the patient or resident says otherwise, but I think we should reverse it. People are distracted, people are suffering from mental illnesses, people may be medicated, they may be addressing other things than this. You could well say, "Oh, well, the hospital would have a series of forms." Undoubtedly there's a plethora of forms that people have to sign, and they're going to just sign them where they're told because, again, they're addressing their broader health needs and health interests.

The other area that really jumped out, and other people have addressed it, was the cost of implementation. You had organizations appearing before the committee. You had organizations like, once again, the Canadian Mental Health Association talking about having branches so small that the cost of acquiring the hardware and the software is going to be prohibitive. Surely, if this bill becomes law, every person in this province, every Ontarian, has to be entitled to avail himself or herself of the provisions of the bill. You can't say: "Oh, well, the law applies in the city of Toronto. Only the people of Toronto are going to have protection regarding privacy of health information, to the extent there is protection in the bill, but folks out in more remote areas aren't going to have it."

1750

Interruption.

Mr Kormos: Are these BlackBerries legal in the chamber, or are they still being seized by the Sergeant at Arms, even if they're buzzing and vibrating on people's desks? There's one over here in this area, Sergeant at Arms, that's vibrating and buzzing. You might want to investigate and do a seizure, a confiscation, and destroy it, stomp on it. Just take it out to the parking lot and drive over it.

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): Isn't there anything better to say?

Mr Kormos: Wait a minute. Mr Racco is getting irritated now, because it was probably his BlackBerry that was buzzing. Is that a smile on his face? I don't know. It's a BlackBerry vibrating, Mr Racco. Be careful: This technology is going to bury you. You know that, don't you? It's going to be the end of you yet. No matter how hard you try, Mr Racco, this technology is going to throw you for a loop.

Interjection: Come on, Peter, get back to the subject.

Mr Kormos: I was distracted by Mr Racco over here, who seemed to have woken up for the briefest of moments when I mentioned his BlackBerry. I was just distracted for the briefest of moments.

The cost of implementation—Ms Martel raised this in the strongest way. This government, other governments, provincial governments do this all the time: Not inappropriately, they impose standards on municipalities, but those standards more often than not have price tags attached to them. I've got to tell you, organizations like the CMHA, out there doing their best, working with meagre resources to begin with, have expressed concern

about the prospect not only of the initial cost but, quite frankly, about updating as time goes by, because they're going to have synchronize and coordinate.

Don't forget, this is a government whose Minister of Transportation a few weeks ago was contemplating using biometric information on drivers' licences. I mentioned at the time to any number of folks: "Give your heads a shake. What are you guys thinking?" That type of biometric information, first of all, being gathered and, second, being recorded, is so antithetical to Canadians—Canadians will just dig in their heels and say no. It was impolitic of the minister, but then this is the same minister who last week was courting the Klein exercise in retesting every driver in the province. How many? Eight million? Eight million drivers' licences—retesting them all? What a score for the private driver-testing centres, at the same time recognizing of course the lineups down where I come from and, I suspect, where you come from too. People are waiting four, five and six months to be tested in the first instance, never mind retesting 8.1 million.

This government, of course, maintains the privatized driver centres. Mr Levac might be interested, because I remember many an occasion when Mr Levac stood side by side with me out there with public sector workers, Mr Levac committing himself—and I know he was sincere—to restoration to the public sector of those things that had been privatized. I trust Mr Levac is using all his influence in his caucus and on his cabinet colleagues to return the privatized driver-testing centres to the public sector.

The last government was obsessed with urine testing. Remember that? They were. It was scatological in the breadth of it. I had these images of big tanker trucks criss-crossing the province going to labs. Don't you remember the debate about that? The Liberals were up in arms about that.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Yes. There's no accounting for the schemes ministers will concoct when they want to appear to be on top of an issue—so, you know, sloshy urine testing. Now we've got a minister who campaigned on change delivering more of the same: He wants to record biometric information. I think back to some criminology 101 class. There's a whole history of using calipers to measure people's skulls and determine criminality and all that. Of course, people had to be dead. Well, not all of them. Some got elected who had their brains removed so you could slice up the brains and expose them to—well, think about it.

So now we've got a government that on the one hand wants to talk about preserving or protecting privacy yet is so hell-bent on invading privacy, on acquiring this biometric information to put on drivers' licences, on submitting all those good drivers—we haven't even got the drunk drivers off the road yet and this government wants to start submitting good drivers to retesting, at a huge cost to them and an enormous profit potential for the private driver-testing centres. So I suppose it's no wonder—

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): What's this got to do with the bill?

Mr Kormos: This may have absolutely nothing to do with the bill, and if you're interested, stand up on a point of order and let the Speaker rule. He may go with you. You may be one of the few government members to actually make a point of order that's valid. Feel free.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: We're wrapping up in two minutes. You're right, I'm bored to tears. You haven't been at all helpful, Mr Racco.

The Deputy Speaker: It would be helpful if the member would direct his comments through the Chair rather than carrying on a conversation.

Mr Kormos: I've got to talk these two minutes and 20 seconds out. Mr Racco is playing with his BlackBerry. The smile is gone. I don't know what kind of messages he's reading now. People should know that the taxpayer is picking up the tab for the BlackBerry—not inappropriately; everybody gets one.

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I don't have one.

Mr Kormos: Neither do I, Peters. I won't even carry a cellphone with me. It stays in the truck.

So here we are at second reading. I invite the government to put this bill into committee of the whole House. Again, New Democrats are supporting the bill on principle and have identified a number of areas—in my case, I'm concerned about the cost of the implementation of this, especially for smaller and non-profit agencies that are already up against the wall in terms of raising money, and the incredible way in which the government allows some very fundamental health care information to be divulged with respect to patients in hospitals or residents

of hospitals or other treatment centres. It can be addressed very quickly.

So that's it. Here it is: day 2. I'm surprised this bill is going to last beyond two days, but here it is; it will. People are going to talk this bill out today. It will go into a third sessional day. The government may have to bring a time allocation motion to get it passed.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Well, it may.

Mrs Sandals: On all-party agreement.

Mr Kormos: No. Some wisecracker back here from the Liberal rump backbench is talking about all-party agreement. Not bloody likely.

Mrs Sandals: You just said you were going to support it.

Mr Kormos: We'll support it, but we'll let it take its course, quite frankly. But if you were to commit yourselves to committee of the whole and amendments in the areas that New Democrats have identified as problematic, you may well find yourselves expediting the bill in a manner that you never, ever anticipated.

So I want to spank you—thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity. We won't spank the Speaker today. That generates another punch line I'll save for another occasion. I want to thank you for the chance to participate in this lively, enthusiastic debate. I've been thrilled to be involved in this exchange of wits—a battle of wits, as one said, between unarmed men—and I look forward to the next exciting, stimulating debate in this chamber.

The Deputy Speaker: It being almost 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1759.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)	Should read:
25	1215	1	12-13	Projet de loi 47, Loi visant à protéger les personnes recevant des soins contre les mauvais traitements.

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Takhar, Hon / L'hon Harinder S. (L)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
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Wilkinson, John (L)	Perth-Middlesex	
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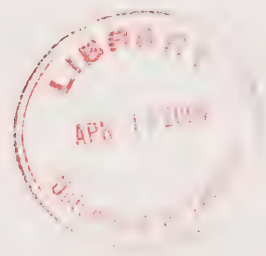
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(Hansard)****Journal
des débats
(Hansard)****Monday 5 April 2004****Lundi 5 avril 2004**Speaker
Honourable Alvin CurlingPrésident
L'honorable Alvin CurlingClerk
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Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 5 April 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 5 avril 2004

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

COMMITMENT TO THE FUTURE OF MEDICARE ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR L'ENGAGEMENT D'ASSURER L'AVENIR DE L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 1, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 8, An Act to establish the Ontario Health Quality Council, to enact new legislation concerning health service accessibility and repeal the Health Care Accessibility Act, to provide for accountability in the health service sector, and to amend the Health Insurance Act / *Projet de loi 8, Loi créant le Conseil ontarien de la qualité des services de santé, édictant une nouvelle loi relative à l'accessibilité aux services de santé et abrogeant la Loi sur l'accessibilité aux services de santé, prévoyant l'imputabilité du secteur des services de santé et modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): The Chair recognizes the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak on Bill 8. I will be sharing my time with the member from Mississauga East. I want to make a couple of comments, which I think are very significant to the people of Ontario and, of course, to my riding of Niagara Falls.

The bill itself: There are a number of key components of the bill, but I want to touch on some of them before I share some information about my experiences when I toured the province with the committee studying the bill. One of the most important features of the bill is that it's banning two-tier health care and making health care institutions and government collectively accountable for protecting medicare and for delivering results. Coming from a community and sitting on a hospital board and a foundation, that's something that I'm aware of and know is significant. The other thing I want to mention about the bill is that labour unions are not subject to, and never will be subject to, any accountability agreements.

I kept hearing over and over from the opposite side that nobody ever supported this bill, that everyone spoke against it. That's all we heard. I toured the province and

did hearings here in Toronto. I just want to read into Hansard some of the comments from a number of the stakeholders who attended the meetings and presented evidence.

When the Capital Health Alliance came, they commented that they supported the overarching principles of this bill. Another comment from the Headwaters Health Care Centre: We support "the principle of ensuring accessibility." Another one from the Toronto District Health Council was that they strongly supported the accountability focus in this bill and that accountability measures must be complemented at the community level. Here's one from the Montfort Hospital: We're "not afraid of accountability.... members of the board of trustees of the only francophone teaching hospital in Ontario, as well as" the hospital's "management, have always been accountable to our community.... We can't afford not to be accountable. We are the beginning and the end of the health care stakes for" all francophone Ontarians. As well, here is a comment from Halton Healthcare Services: We support "the concept of accountability agreements being developed between the minister and the board."

One of the other things I was pleased to see that the Minister of Health did shortly after we started having our public meetings was that there were some concerns expressed by the stakeholders and the presenters to our committee about the bill, and the minister immediately took the initiative to address some of those. He presented to us and to the public the minister's "proposed framework," he called it, dated February 19. He suggested some proposed changes or amendments to the bill. I wanted to comment on some of the responses we heard from some of the groups who had the opportunity to listen to those proposals that were being considered.

The West Lincoln Memorial Hospital, just up the street from my riding of Niagara Falls: "We agree with the direction of the changes proposed" by the minister. We had, as well, the Ontario Dental Association, which was pleased that the minister intends to exclude physicians and groups, practices and associations, from part III of the bill. As well, we had the Ontario Association of Medical Laboratories, who said: We welcome the proposed amendments, particularly with respect to the "limitations on the ability of the general manager of OHIP" and the minister "to collect personal health information."

So for those on the other side who have constantly said to this House that no one supports this bill and it's

the worst bill they've ever seen, they obviously weren't listening to the comments by many of the stakeholders, who said it's a step in the right direction.

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak for a few minutes on the bill, to indicate my support. I'm pleased to turn my remaining time over to my colleague.

1850

Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I'd like to thank my colleague the member for Niagara Falls for speaking so eloquently on a bill that is so important to Ontarians. This is a bill, really, that is transforming health care here in Ontario. Medicare has been seen as the best expression of Canadian values. These values fuel our determination, improve health care and are really going to put us on a sustainable path to benefit future generations.

Tough decisions have to be made and that is because of the sustainability of health care, that we continue to deliver universal health care. We have come from previous governments that have worked with different models, models that have been ones of slash and burn or tax and spend. We know those models just do not work.

Our government believes in medicare, and there are obviously pressures right now on the health care system. We have an aging and growing population. There's more demand for access to new technologies, emerging public health threats from an increasingly connected world. All these threats are causing strains on our health care system, as were so evidently seen in many of the crises we experienced last year.

But this is a remarkable time for Ontario and for health care. Over the last few years we've had review after review, study after study. They've only served to reinforce the notion that we want and need universal health care. But they also concluded that, within that framework, major reform is required, and that's what this bill is bringing. Bill 8 is bringing that major reform that is required to have universal health care, not just for us but for future generations.

We've spoken on subjects loud and clear. Roy Romanow has also come forth, talking about accountability, knowing that that is the sixth pillar he has brought forth that is needed within our health care system to make sure that—

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Has he endorsed our bill? Is Roy supporting our bill?

Mr Fonseca: This bill is built on what Roy has said. As the member for Niagara Falls mentioned, there are many citizens who have come forth in support of this bill, knowing its importance. The most important thing here is that on October 2 the people said, "We want reform." People voted for real, positive change. Now is the time to deliver, and we are delivering as a government. We are taking on these challenges that were not taken on by previous governments. Hard decisions have to be made, but they are being made. We're committed to restoring the foundations in things like nursing. Nursing is the heart of health care and we want to make sure nursing is there, unlike the previous government, which slashed

12,000 nurses once they came into power. This is about building a system.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I want to comment on the comments of the members from Niagara Falls and Mississauga East, but particularly the member from Niagara Falls, who cited example after example of stakeholders who were in support of this bill.

It was a pretty weak statement of support. It was one of those basic things when you go to a hearing: "Yes, we support the principle of accountability in the health care system." Well, who doesn't? "We support the principle of accessibility in the health care system." Of course, everyone supports those principles. The problem with this bill is, it doesn't address the problems in the health care system. It doesn't address how we're going to deal with waiting times for MRIs, heart surgery, hip surgery or knee surgery. It doesn't address the needs in the health care system. What it does do is put an excessive amount of power into the hands of the Minister of Health. That's what it does.

I also want to talk about the federal government when it comes to health care and how they have not owned up to their responsibility for dealing with health care in this country. That's another part of the problem in health care. Until we can get better agreements with the federal government, we're going to find funding health care in all provinces more and more difficult as time goes on, because the demand is going to continue to grow as new technologies offer new kinds of health care.

Yes, we support accountability in the health care system, but we don't support draconian measures in the health care system that mean all of the hospitals in this province will be run by the Minister of Health, as opposed to the boards drawn from their communities to operate those hospitals and work with the CEOs, the nursing staff and the medical staff to operate those hospitals more efficiently. We don't want to see the Minister of Health as the de facto CEO of every hospital in this province. That's the real fear in this bill, Bill 8.

As far as the approvals of stakeholders, those kinds of approvals are pretty easy to get. But there are far, far more detailed submissions by people who are unhappy with this legislation, not the "Hi, how are you doing, we're pleased to meet you at the committee" kind of response that you're going to get from everybody who's making a submission.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I rise to comment on what the members for Niagara Falls and Mississauga East had to say.

Quite frankly, it is all well and good to quote two or three stakeholders and a couple sentences each on what they had to say, but—

Interjection.

Mr Prue: I'm going to get to Roy in a minute—I will tell you that the overwhelming majority, in fact, almost all of the stakeholders, said the very opposite of what you're saying here today. Countless numbers of them who were there said that this bill is not going to do what

you claim it's going to do. It is not going to stop two-tier medicine in this country. You have actually cherry-picked the statements. The response you have given from them is very weak and tepid. The reality is that you will not stop that.

You constantly talk about Roy Romanow, but I want to tell you that before Roy Romanow gave his excellent report that you pay lip service to in this House, there was another guy by the name of Michael Kirby. Do you all remember him? He's sort of a liberal guy, a senator who actually talked at great length about what the real Liberal position is in Ottawa and, I would suggest, what the real Liberal position is in this House. It's quite different from Roy Romanow. It includes all kinds of concepts that you are toying with, like two-tier medicine, all kinds of concepts about taking democracy out of the hospitals, all kinds of concepts about user-pay and having the poor shoulder the burden. All those were contained by Michael Kirby and all of those ideas are still floating around. You can talk about Roy Romanow all you want; I do not believe that you embrace that very great man's views. I think you are parroting the views, saying you support him, but the reality is that you actually support Michael Kirby. The reality is that this remains a bad bill in spite of what you are saying about Roy Romanow. Thank you very much.

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I'm privileged to rise again in this place.

Interjection.

Mr Ramal: No. I've never heard it before. Just somebody, I guess, from Ottawa. Anyway, Mr Speaker—

The Acting Speaker: Order over here, please. Thank you.

Mr Ramal: I listened last week for a long time to debates about Bill 8. I had the privilege to listen to the Ministry of Health talk about how they tied accountability to funding and supporting hospitals. I guess the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke didn't read the bill very well or read what the bill entails. When we talk about how we can enhance delivery and health care in the hospitals, we tie it automatically to improvement in the hospitals' efficiency, and also how it can be accountable using the taxpayers' money well in order to enhance the hospitals and minimize the waiting list, and also timing lists, I guess, if you go back to it.

Also, to have more information about it, I had the privilege to meet with many CEOs in London, Ontario, to talk to them about Bill 8 and listen to those professionals who provide health care for the people of this province, and they told me about Bill 8. They had a little bit of concern; I agree with you on that concern. Do you know why? When the government comes out with a bill, they always tie it to a past memory, to the past government, how they treated people in health care. That's why, after we talked to them and explained what we intended to do, do you know what? The issue was clear. I believe that our government and Bill 8 are on the right track to enhance health care and deliver good health care to the people of this province, for the first time ever in the history of this province.

1900

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to get up and speak this afternoon on Bill 8. For the record, I want to start by saying that the former Minister of Health, the honourable Elizabeth Witmer, tried in many respects to work out agreements with all health care providers. I should say that I did sit through the clause-by-clause review of this 46-page or so bill on the last day and found that not a single amendment was accepted by the government. That probably demonstrates clearly why this bill is going to experience some difficulty—not just in passing, because they'll ram it through, and that's the point.

The speakers today are mouthing the platitudes given to them by George Smitherman and the government—Mr McGuinty and the Premier's office—who are basically running it. I saw the members of the government sitting on the committee—hostages really—being told what to say by the whip, by the House leader, by the minister and by the Premier's office. Clearly, they heard from the people of Ontario, as I'll be saying in the next few minutes.

We know this bill hasn't got it right. As Ms Witmer has said, this bill should be sent out for public hearings, because, I can tell you, the hospitals are upset. The doctors, because they're in negotiations on their fee schedule with the Ministry of Health, are inside the tent; they're not saying very much at the moment.

This pulls all the power back to the centre, back to the Premier's office, back to—I don't know whether the Premier is Greg Sorbara or Dalton McGuinty—one of those two people. It's clear the finance minister and the now acting Premier are not listening to the people of Ontario, as we are in the opposition. I encourage those viewing tonight to wait, because I will be speaking in a few minutes and I want to review certain sections of the bill that give exemplary power, almost draconian power, to the Minister of Health.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Mississauga East in response.

Mr Fonseca: The previous government hid \$1.52 billion in the hospitals, not being open and transparent—we were having conversations about being open and transparent. What we are doing is revitalizing the health care system, which the other government didn't do. The previous government was about silos. We're about breaking those silos, those impenetrable, artificial walls that they allowed to exist. We are here to make sure that universal health care will be with us forever, something the previous government didn't believe in. The previous government didn't care for health care. The previous government wasn't here to build the system.

We are here to build a system, and that's why Bill 8 is needed. Bill 8 is about sustainability. It's about transforming health care. Actually, what we're looking at is what is seen as sick care, and we are bringing in health care. Accountability will be the watchword of our renewed health care system. Let us be clear today that we, as government, are here to share responsibility in that accountability, and we know whom we are accountable

to. We are accountable to 12 million Ontarians. That's whom we are accountable to.

Yes, we are setting priorities, which haven't been set in the past. In the past there were 100 different priorities. What we're saying to hospitals is, "We want you to reduce wait times." We want to improve access to family physicians. We want to make Ontarians healthier. That's what we're here for.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr O'Toole: It's a pleasure to get up and speak this afternoon. It's so seldom I get a chance to speak in the House, to put a voice to the people of Durham.

I do that out of respect. I would say that the very first thing I want to put on the record is the voice of the people. You'd be happy to know that my riding of Durham is a wonderful riding that's made up of rural and urban. It's a place I'm pleased to live in and happy to serve.

But I'm disappointed, because the volunteers have been struck down and their voice has been neutralized. In Bill 8, Mr Smitherman, the Minister of Health, has refused to accept input from even the most modest in health care. I'm going to read a couple of things here, with your indulgence, that need to be on the record. This is a press release, not by our office but by Lakeridge Health—their theme and motto is to put patients first. I completely support that. In fact, I can say with some reflection that I know many of the members, both present and past, who have served voluntarily on the Lakeridge Health board. I'm going to put their names on the record because I think it's important that their voice be given articulation here in the House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Anne Wright from Port Perry serves as chair. She's a chartered accountant by profession and her special interest is health care. That's why, when she moved to Durham, she offered her services to Lakeridge Health.

Marion Saunders of Newcastle is the first vice-chair. Marion is a former high school English, history and Latin teacher who has taught at George Brown College in the volunteer management program. She's a very willing and very capable volunteer.

David Kimmerly of Oshawa is the second vice-chair. Dave is employed by Durham Regional Police Services and currently holds the position of director of employment services. You see here the mix and talent that's being compromised or neutralized by this bill. I need to put face and faith that these boards have served the people of Ontario well.

Christopher Cartwright, a former resident of Brooklin, now a resident of Toronto, is treasurer. Chris is Hydro Vaughan's director of finance, so he brings a lot of that perspective voluntarily to the committee.

Judith Spring of Oshawa is past chair. Judy's been a trustee since the five Lakeridge Health sites were amalgamated in 1998 and has indeed served as chair. Judy combines her leadership role at Lakeridge Health with her role as Durham College's dean of the School of Integrated Studies, so again bringing great talent and respect.

Robert Amos of Oshawa has been on the board of trustees since 1998. Bob is a co-manager and co-founder of Oshawa Funeral Service, and is actively involved in Oshawa minor hockey and the Kiwanis Club of Oshawa.

Normand—I know him as Rusty—Beauchesne of Balsam has been a trustee since 2001, a member of the Law Society of Upper Canada and a licensed funeral director. Rusty is involved with the National Parole Board and previously provided legal advice to the chief of police and members of the Toronto service board. His list of community involvement is too long to mention, but it does include another board that I'm on, which is the physician recruitment board at the Port Perry site of Lakeridge Health.

Dave Broadbent, from Oshawa, is a retiree from General Motors. In fact, he was president of the CAW. He's a good friend. In my time in labour relations at GM I worked with Dave Broadbent. Dave is a member of the Durham College board of directors as well. A retired volunteer, a former union organizer and a respected individual who, now in retirement, voluntarily gives his time.

Rudy Chernecki of Oshawa is a business administration professor at Durham College and Trent University. He is currently chair of the planning, priorities and performance committee and has given generously of time and talent to the board.

Rick Gay, of a well-known family, five generations in Oshawa, has served on the board since 2000. He's been involved in property construction as well as development. He's been on the Oshawa General Hospital property committee for many years.

Katherine Jackson of Oshawa is currently administrator of the Wynfield long-term-care facility and has worked for 25 years as a health care administrator and consultant in long-term care. She holds a management certificate from the University of Toronto, and York University and is also a registered nurse. The list of talent here is worthy of mentioning. This is the talent that's being ignored, rescinded and taken back—centralized control from the Ministry of Health.

Ann McGuire of Whitby is a nursing professor at Durham College, with a masters in health sciences. The depth of talent is actually staggering.

Bryan McLellan of Courtice, which is in my riding specifically, joined the Lakeridge Health board in 2001. His role is vice-president of finance and administration with Johnson & Johnson medical. He's involved with health care systems across the country through servicing hospitals' medical device needs and has worked in the health care field for many years.

Frank Pinguet of Uxbridge is a retired banking executive. Frank has served his community hospital since 1970—26 years as a trustee—mostly in Port Perry, another very important part of my riding that I have a great deal of affection for. I have lived there over the past period of time.

Jennifer Tredinnick-Moir of Whitby is a senior planner at Humber regional hospital in Toronto. Jennifer

is currently working toward completing her Canadian College of Health Service Executives. A former member of the Memorial Hospital board in Bowmanville, Jennifer is a great contributor to the board.

The list goes on. Leslie Wilkinson of Port Perry is a special education teacher. Leslie has been a member of the board since 1998.

Nicole Zwiers is a litigation lawyer with the Toronto office of Fasken Martineau. Nicole was born in Oshawa and raised in Whitby and is a member of the law society in good standing, planning, I'm sure, a young family.

I look at the list here of people who give, and these are faces and names of people whom your minister is actually eliminating, basically, if you look at Bill 8. It's tragic. It's a tragic loss of talent and commitment that integrates health care not just in Durham, my wonderful riding, probably one of the great places of Ontario. It saddens me, really, when I think of it, because I have a couple of sisters who are nurses. There is a lot of consternation.

I was reading an article here. The union fears the bill will lead to job losses. But it goes much deeper than that. They build communities. These are nurses and front-line health care professionals who provide services to the people, the patients. These aren't clients; these are patients.

Lakeridge Health has up to 1,500 visits on any given day. So this is an essential service that's being micro-managed from the centre, from the Ministry of Health. That is just not appropriate. I can tell you that Brian Lemon, who has been the chief executive officer of Lakeridge Health since 1998, was part of the team that merged the hospitals in Durham under the Health Services Restructuring Commission. We've tried to minimize and yet maximize the governance model in health care.

You would know that Duncan Sinclair, the associate dean of medicine at Queen's, led the health services restructuring committee, which looked at all the 230-plus hospitals in Ontario and said, "We've got to do the right thing." So they did minimize the governance model. In fact, it was with some pain that they merged all the hospitals by region, and we will be following orders as soon as possible.

The key thing is that I wanted to put a face and a name to the people who serve in a voluntary capacity on boards. Now what do I see? What I see now is that the minister, with the stroke of a pen on any day, at any hour, can just absolve, force them, exempt the rules. In fact, if you look at the bill, there's a section in here that says it will be deemed to have been in concurrence with a ministerial order if they don't respond within a certain period of time. How arrogant. Just that line alone—the arrogance, the smugness. In all sincerity, this is the one section that, at the end of the day, exempts the minister. It's frightening.

What I'm saying to you is that I am so frustrated that it is time now to adjourn the debate. It's unfortunate, but debate has been shut down. I'm adjourning the debate.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Durham has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. It will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1914 to 1944.

The Acting Speaker: Order. The member from Durham has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour of the motion, please rise.

All those opposed to the motion, please rise.

Would the members take their seats, please.

Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller): The ayes are 2; the nays are 40.

The Acting Speaker: In my opinion, the motion is lost.

Further debate? Questions and comments? The member for Durham.

Mr O'Toole: Mr Speaker, I would move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Take your seat. Questions and comments?

Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I'm happy to speak tonight in support of Bill 8, the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act. This bill is especially important to my riding, and the issue of improving medicare has been the most important issue in Brampton for decades. The Honourable Bill Davis stood in this House and in 1960—

Interjection: What Bill Davis?

Mrs Jeffrey: Premier Bill Davis talked in his 1960 maiden speech about the need for a new hospital in Peel and called upon the then Minister of Health for assistance. More than 40 years later, we're still waiting for that hospital to be built.

Since being elected MPP for Brampton Centre, I've received numerous phone calls and letters and I've spoken to many organizations and people regarding the privatization of health care. What this bill is going to do is hugely important to my riding. It's going to make it illegal for people to pay to get faster medical service for insured services. It's going to give providers and consumers whistle-blowing protection should they report an abuse of the system. It's going to ensure that all health care providers covered by OHIP are responsible for OHIP billings made under their OHIP number. It's going to establish a health care quality council which will monitor and protect Ontario's public health care system. It's going to entrench accountability. What could be more important than entrenching accountability? We need to be accountable to the people who elect us. We need to provide health care. This bill is one that I'm happy to support. It's one that is going to set the stage for our future and our children's future, for all those who come after us.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to participate in this debate and I want to compliment my

colleague for his comments and challenge to the government to strengthen this bill.

We will be supporting it because it is the right thing to do. We have some difficulty. Probably this will be the only time over the next three and a half years that we'll be able to support any bill that this government presents. What I want to—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Can we have some order? The member for Oak Ridges, please continue.

Mr Klees: I think in light of the fact that members don't want to listen to me, I'd prefer to just adjourn debate, or adjourn the House. Why don't we adjourn the House? I so move.

The Acting Speaker: That's not in order. Continue with your questions and comments, if you wish.

Mr Klees: I'm happy to do that. As I say, I have no doubt that this will be the only time I will stand in my place and support a bill presented by this government, because it is the right thing to do.

Applause.

Mr Klees: I thank the members opposite for their applause. I want to thank the member for Durham for his brilliant debate on this issue and I look forward to his response to the comments that we have made in the House in support of him tonight.

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Mr Prue: I must confess I was at a complete loss on how to comment on the statements made by the member from Durham. I listened to him at some length and actually could not figure out what he was talking about during his 10 minutes.

I always want to try to comment and be positive about what is said, but it has now become crystal clear to me, having heard Mr Klees and what he had to say about this bill and what the Conservatives are going to do, what this bill is. This is a Tory bill that is being proposed by the Liberals. This is from the former government, which voted not to give seniors a bath. This is from the former government, where the Premier called nurses redundant like Hula Hoops. Now we see that they are supporting this government in a bill that has to be one of the most bizarre bills that has ever been before this House. It is a bill that purports to save medicare in some form and does nothing of the sort.

There are huge issues out there related to medicare. There are huge issues out there related to hospitals. I need only talk about a few of them: the 8,000 nurses this government promised to produce; the receipt of foreign doctors' credentials—we have about 10,000 in this province who cannot do what they're supposed to do; the funds for hospitals that are not there; the undoing of privatization in P3 hospitals; the funds to train nurses for northern development. All those things need to be talked about, but we are talking about this bizarre little bill, and now it has all become crystal clear to me why.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): It's evident that we have a drifting opposition, drifting from supporting Bill 8 to opposing Bill 8. As the member from

Beaches-East York said, you couldn't really understand anything the member from Durham was saying. No wonder the member from Oak Ridges is voting contrary to the member from Durham. I think we have just seen an illustration of how confused this Conservative opposition is—utter confusion. Maybe someone will stand up and explain the confusion. One member who is running for leader of this party—

Interjections.

Mr Colle: Is he running for leader? Well, I think he's just lost it—the member from Durham agrees. The member from Oak Ridges has just lost any credibility, because he doesn't even know what bill is before us, or maybe he does support Bill 8. I think it demonstrates that the Conservative opposition is more interested in shutting down debate and playing games. The member from Durham, for the third time, shut down debate here.

Interjection: Why would he want to do that?

Mr Colle: Because he's so entrenched in the ways of Mike Harris and the whiz kids. For eight years that's all they did: They shut down debate.

Someone talked about amendments. Well, we had more amendments in the standing committee on finance and economic affairs—more amendments in that one committee—than the former government had in eight years. We have gone out to the people already on first reading on this bill.

Interjection.

Mr Colle: Let's try and clear up this mass confusion, member from Simcoe North. Who's in charge over there? I'd like to know.

The Acting Speaker: I thought the member wanted to talk about the St Michael's Majors hockey team, but I guess not.

We'll recognize the member from Durham in response.

Mr O'Toole: The response I've had over almost 10 minutes is shameful. The opposition doesn't realize that the frustration I was trying to outline is that you may have had more consultations, but you didn't listen. The people of Ontario aren't—

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: I got a letter on March 17 from Anne Wright, of a community hospital network serving 365,000 patients: "We believe we have no choice but to state our objection to Bill 8 as amended at the standing committee on March 9." There it is, very clear. There is simply no support for this bill.

In fact, if I pay attention to a couple of sections in here, it exempts the minister from any kind of reprisals. Section 30 of the bill says, "No compensation or damages shall be payable by the crown, the minister or an employee or agent." It exempts the minister from any liability or risk. It's the minister's way or the highway. Minister Smitherman has exempted and usurped the power of the boards.

Bill 8 is a shameful embarrassment. I'm surprised. They're all laughing at the volunteers I outlined earlier this evening. They're laughing, barracking and ridiculing

the very volunteers who build communities, who give of their time and professional characteristics to make our community stronger. This government refuses to listen. With all respect, Elizabeth Witmer, the former Minister of Health, has called on you repeatedly with numerous peaceful amendments. They rejected them. She calls for further consultation. I move that we adjourn the debate, adjourn the House.

Mr Klees: On a point of personal privilege, Mr Speaker: I want to clarify for the House. This is very important, Speaker. I am sure you agree. I was advised that we were dealing with Bill 31. Under no circumstance—it's important, Speaker, that any support that I would have expressed in my response was for Bill 31. I am absolutely opposed to Bill 8.

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of privilege.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't think it's in order to have a member try to apologize that they don't know what bill is in the House. I'd like you to rule on that.

The Acting Speaker: That's out of order. House leader?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): In terms of your ruling with respect to that, I must share his position. The one member spoke about one bill and he responded to another bill. The apparent confusion could cause concern with Hansard. I just think it's important to note the point of order that it's out—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, House leader. OK. It's out of order. Is the third party going to speak to the bill? The Chair recognizes the member for Beaches-East York.

Mr Prue: It is my privilege to actually talk to Bill 8 here tonight. It is important for me, though, to preface my remarks to this government before I get to Bill 8. This is a bill that is tepid; it is weak and does almost nothing in terms of protecting medicare or stopping P3 hospitals. There are so many things that need to be done. Roy Romanow set them all out, as one of the previous speakers had to say.

But I keep thinking that this party is not listening to Roy Romanow; I keep thinking that they're listening to Michael Kirby. That is the reality of what is happening here tonight, because Michael Kirby wanted to send you on a whole different track, and that is in fact where you are going.

During the election, the Liberals had a lot to talk about in terms of medicare and the health system and what needed to be done. I don't ever remember them talking about what is contained here in Bill 8. I don't ever remember them talking about accountability agreements or a health quality council. That really wasn't part of their main message. Their main message out there about medicare was very simple: They were going to introduce bills and put forward money that was going to hire 8,000 new nurses in this province, at least 2,000 in the first year of their mandate.

I know that the budget is not up yet and I know that we're all hoping for next month, but they've been here

for six months and no new nurses have been hired. In fact, their only action to date has been to cancel the program that allowed nurses who were willing to go and work in far northern developments and communities that did not have them. Their only answer was to cancel that. There was a lot of talk about—

Interjections.

Mr Prue: I've got a lot of people muttering around me, so I must be hitting some nerves.

They talked a lot about our foreign doctors. I would like to correct the record. In my statement I was getting a little carried away and I believe I said 10,000, but there are at least 1,000 foreign doctors in this province who want to work, who have been trained and who have excellent credentials.

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In my own community there's a Dr Lang. I asked a question in the House before Christmas about Dr Lang. Dr Lang is a Canadian-born individual who lives in my community. In his last year of medical school he went to Germany to study some really good medical procedures that that country had to offer and got his medical degree in Germany. That individual, Dr Lang, who has lived in this country for all but a couple of years of his life, is not recognized. He is not recognized in our community in spite of the fact that he went to the public school in my neighbourhood. In fact, he went to East York Collegiate. He went to the University of Toronto for his pre-doctoral studies and he finished his doctoral degree in Germany. We don't recognize him. Our community, even a community as large as Toronto, needs him, and there's nothing in this bill that is going to work for that.

There's nothing in this bill that's going to properly fund hospitals, at least not that I see; there's nothing in the bill that's going to undo privatization; there's nothing in the bill that's going to give more money for community care access centres; and there's nothing in this bill that is going to go so far as the Liberals when they promised an increase of 25% in the budget for our community services.

What is in this bill, Bill 8, is an outside promise to stop two-tier medicine. In the previous House we had a minister who was called Two-Tier Tony, because Two-Tier Tony was absolutely adamant in proposing everything he could to privatize medicine. But in this bill we see nothing to undo any of that. What we're looking forward to is a bill that does. What a disappointment when we saw what was here today, what we saw that has been before this Legislature for the last number of weeks.

People came from all across Ontario to make deputations. Although there were two, three or four good comments—I'm sure the member opposite, when he was gleaning Hansard, had to search high and low to find a few sentences that were favourable—the overwhelming majority of what was said by virtually every deputant was that this bill does not do what it is supposed to do, and that is to stop two-tier medicine. In fact, it does nothing of the sort. The only two things that are left in the bill, after it's been amended and amended because it

was so bad to begin with, are on the issue of the accountability agreements and, second, on the issue of the health quality council.

I don't think I can say it any better than the legal memo that was written by Sack Goldblatt Mitchell. They wrote to the Legislature. I'd just like to quote it—it's a couple of paragraphs long—because it says in a nutshell what really is wrong with this bill.

"The overall accountability regime is still a fundamental feature of the bill, and may well be used to facilitate increased centralization, regionalization, and privatization and divestment, of hospital and other health care services.

"Thus, while it has been amended, the power of the minister to control and direct the operation and restructuring of the health care system through accountability and performance agreements—entered into voluntarily or not—with health resource providers and their chief executive officers, is cause for significant concern.

"This regime vests unprecedented centralized power in the minister and cabinet to oversee and compel fundamental restructuring in the delivery of hospital services, with limited public scrutiny and oversight. Of at least equal significance, one of the potential effects and purposes of the entire accountability scheme is likely to encourage or require the 'rationalization' of services, including payroll, food services, maintenance and house-keeping. Hospitals and CEOs, having entered into or been required to enter into accountability agreements providing for this rationalization, can be expected to seek concessions at the bargaining table in order to implement this restructuring through privatization, contracting out, divestment or otherwise.

"Moreover, to the extent the accountability provisions are relied upon to enforce centralization of hospital services, this may well lead to potential disputes over the applicability of collective agreement protections and representational rights. In short, while the power to override collective agreements through direct ministerial fiat has been removed, there will likely be indirect pressure exerted on collective agreement protections as a result of the bill's accountability provisions."

So there it is: flawed

The only other thing that's left is the Health Quality Council. I want to tell the members here, if ever you set up an institution, this has to be one of the great toothless beasts of our times. This cannot do anything. This council will not even have the authority to make recommendations to the minister and it will have no staff component to help them in their deliberations. It is, in fact, a totally toothless beast.

So I go back to where I started: What should we be doing? Should we be talking about a bill that does virtually nothing? Should we be talking about a bill that is not stopping P3 hospitals? Should we be going back to talk about 8,000 nurses or recognizing foreign-trained doctors or other individuals in the health care system? Should we be going back to talk about funding hospitals? Should we be going back to talk about undoing all of

those things that are wrong with privatization? Should we be going back to look at more funds for training nurses for remote communities, or money for the CCACs, or the 25% increase the Premier promised for community services in the upcoming budget? It is my submission to this House that we should be doing all of those things.

Instead, we are spending hour after hour on a bill that will accomplish virtually nothing. It is mere window dressing by a party that has promised to do something about health care and is doing virtually nothing about it.

In the end, the only thing that will be accomplished here is squeezing out the workers who work there and, in fact, putting a hammer lock on those who volunteer to work in the hospitals, particularly on the board of directors. They are very fearful of the provisions of the bill. They are very fearful about what is happening to the hospitals in Ontario. I would suggest that the kindest thing this government can do is withdraw it and, if not withdraw it, at least hold some more public hearings.

Hon Mr Duncan: It is interesting to hear the member speak about this bill in the context of health care reform. When he talks about governments who took draconian actions to strip hospital workers of their rights, whose party was it? Was it the Mike Harris Conservatives that brought in the social contract and the expenditure control plan? Was it the Ernie Eves Conservatives? I don't think so. It was your party, the NDP, without any consultation, without any kind of pre-warning. Which party first proposed charging seniors user fees for their drugs? It was the New Democrats, according to Thomas Walkom.

We had quite a debate in this place for almost three years. One budget they were for user fees, the next budget they were against them. They not only toyed with the idea, they brought it forward in legislation and were prepared to impose it on people. So the member opposite ought not forget his history.

I was particularly pleased the day that Shirley Douglas was here on introduction of Bill 8. We all know Shirley Douglas, the daughter of Tommy Douglas, a great social activist in this country, a well-known New Democrat. She came and supported the principles of Bill 8.

Finally, I would think the member for Beaches-East York would want to acknowledge the parts of the Romanow report that called for accountability, real accountability. There is one government in this country that has responded affirmatively to the Romanow report. Was it Saskatchewan? No. Was it Manitoba? No. It was Ontario. Not Kirby, Romanow. This bill, which has had a lot of hearings—may even have more hearings—is important. We've entertained amendments. We're proud of the amendments.

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The record of the member for Beaches-East York and his party is shameful when it comes to public health care, and it's well documented, in both Hansard and the literature of the time.

Mr Klees: I'm going to take the next two minutes to absolutely confirm my rejection of Bill 8. Members know that I spent a great deal of time on the road with the

committee that reviewed Bill 8. As I have said many times in the House here, had I not had it confused with Bill 31 in my earlier comments, I would have re-asserted—

Hon Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: My understanding of the rules is that on these responses, you're supposed to respond to the other member. You're not supposed to stand up and respond and criticize your previous speech. You should be directing your comments to the member who just spoke. Is my understanding of the rules correct?

The Acting Speaker: It's noted. I'll use discretion. Thank you, House leader.

Hon Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe the standing orders are very clear about this, that the responses are for responding to the speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The member for Oak Ridges, go ahead.

Hon Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Once again, I must insist. The standing orders are very clear with respect to responses. There are a number of rulings that have found favour. If the member wants to recant, we can have—

The Acting Speaker: Mr House leader, it's been heard. We'll listen to the member for what time he's got left.

Mr Klees: I do, with regard to Bill 8, want to thank the member from Beaches-East York, because he succinctly articulated my views relating to Bill 8; that is, that it should be withdrawn. The fact is that it is an affront to health care in the province of Ontario. The House leader opposite knows full well that he should be embarrassed, his entire government should be embarrassed for having brought this bill forward, and I should be embarrassed for having confused it with Bill 31, and I am.

Mr Bisson: I was glad to know that the Tories finally admit to being confused. I think that's a pretty interesting one.

I just want to put on the record, I agree with my colleague Mr Prue, the member from Beaches-East York, that this bill purports in the title to be the bill that basically saves medicare. But when we take a look at the content of the bill, it doesn't do any of the major things that we need to do in order to make sure that our public health care system works well: making sure that we rehire the 8,000 nurses that Mike Harris put out the door; making sure that we find a place for the 1,000 doctors who are foreign grads living now in Ontario who would like to be able to practise medicine in places like Timmins, Kapuskasing or elsewhere, who can't get a job; and the list goes on.

But there are other reasons. I have a letter here from the James Bay General Hospital. It's signed, I believe, by the hospital board chair, Stella Wesley—yes, it is signed by her. It basically says that they are not in support of Bill 8. I better get my bills straight here tonight. They're saying, "The central problem with Bill 8 is that it gives Queen's Park the power to impose anything it likes on any individual hospital."

This is the same thing that the Conservatives did to education. While in power, the Conservatives, basically in the name of restructuring, restructured all the school boards and how school boards operated, and centralized all of the decision-making at Queen's Park when it came to education. Now we've got the hospital board chair of the James Bay General Hospital, who says what you're doing is centralizing control of hospitals at Queen's Park.

I have a letter here from Timmins and District Hospital that's signed by their board chair and, I believe, also by the executive director, which says, "The central problem with Bill 8 is that it gives Queen's Park the power to impose anything it likes on any individual hospital. The government can bypass hospital boards, the people who know the most about the hospital and the services it provides to the community." They are losing the ability to make decisions locally.

So I've got to say, unlike my Conservative friend, Mr Klees, I will vote against this bill.

Mr Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I stand before the House to join the debate on Bill 8. We not only inherited a deficit of \$5.6 billion, we also inherited from the previous government fewer nurses per capita than any other province in Canada. We are the ninth province out of 10 for number of family doctors in this country.

I say that this government, the McGuinty government, firmly believes that public health care is the best kind of health care we have in our province. We believe the health of our people is our most precious resource. I support Bill 8, the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, because it will provide enduring protection for publicly funded and publicly accountable universal medicare in this great province of ours. Bill 8 is the cornerstone bill that will protect our commitment to universal medicare for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Beaches-East York in response.

Mr Prue: It was a pleasure as always to hear the comments of my colleagues, the minister for Windsor-St Clair, the member for Oak Ridges, the member for Timmins-James Bay and the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Sprindale.

I am always reminded that when there is a weakness in argument in this House, when someone doesn't have anything positive to say about their own bill or their own proposals, they always go back into history and point out things that happened five, 10 or 15 years ago, or they talk about other governments—even for members like myself who were not here at that time—as a weakness in the argument that I might have presented. That, I would suggest to the member opposite, is a weakness in your own argument. If you don't have anything positive to say about yourself, please don't use the history of another government, another Parliament. The reality is that you are the government, you are the ones who are making the decisions. It is my job, quite frankly, to criticize you when you're wrong—and you are wrong.

There is a real problem here about the "enduring protection." I heard the last speaker for Bramalea-Gore-

Malton-Sprindale talk about the "enduring protection." Where is the protection for the Canadian public when you are doing nothing about P3 hospitals in this bill? Where is the protection when there are not enough funds? Where is the protection when there are not enough nurses being hired? Where is the protection when there are 1,000 medically trained doctors in this province who want to work, but can't?

Those are the fundamental issues that need to be debated in the House, not to talk about setting up a toothless commission, a toothless body that can't even advise the minister. That's what we're debating; that's not what we should be debating. The real issue, I hope, is in the days and weeks ahead.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Etobicoke Centre.

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): I'm extremely pleased to speak today about Bill 8, a bill that intends to make universal public medicare the law in this province. I represent the riding of Etobicoke Centre, which, you may or may not know, has the highest percentage of seniors of any riding in the province. I can tell you that many of my constituents are very concerned about the privatization of the health care system that we have seen over the past several years. Even seniors well able to pay routine medical bills fear that a two-tier system will become onerously expensive for them. They are also concerned that they will be left behind if others are able to pay their way to the front of the line, for even well-to-do seniors cannot compete with the kind of money-driven system they have in the United States, for example. Seniors on modest fixed incomes would suffer greatly if Bill 8 is not exacted.

I'm going to be sharing my time with my colleague from Kitchener Centre, who I'm sure will expand on many things that I've got to say.

I have some personal experience in the health care field. I've been a volunteer for many years. It's critical that each member of our society has an equal right to quality health care based on need and not on income. I also know from experience, some of it bitter, that we need accountability in our institutions and systems, including health care. We need both a national and a provincial health care council that will oversee and plan for a system as it evolves into the future.

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I predict that most health care institutions will welcome the accountability agreements, because they bring a unifying force to the key areas of access, quality and safety. I doubt the government will have to impose any remedies—or, if any, very few, since accountability agreements will be negotiated in a fair and open manner between the boards and the minister.

Not only is our government committed to voluntary governance, but you know what? So are most hospital boards and their communities. But voluntary governance always works better when there are clear expectations of what should be delivered to whom and when. We have some of the best hospital trustees imaginable in this

province, and they will do even better with this improved guidance.

It is difficult to provide oversight and planning that serves the public in privately-owned and -controlled hospitals. Look at the wide disparity of hospitals in the United States and the ways in which many members of the public are denied service, some shunted from one to another depending on their insurance coverage.

Ontario is rich in experience, expertise and sensitivity when it comes to persons who can serve on the Ontario Health Quality Council. We have no worry about the quality of people we will find to serve on this council, and the nation is well served by health care specialists and planners who will no doubt make up the national health care centre as well.

It is exciting to contemplate what these councils will bring to our system. I can tell you that we need these councils to provide oversight and to bring us together. We need more accountability throughout the system, and I don't think anyone is opposed to accountability.

Having worked with nurses and with organized labour in health care, I know that these groups share our desire for a strong medicare in Ontario, and I will do my best to make certain that these groups understand their protections are enhanced and not reduced by Bill 8.

Bill 8 will bring innovation to accountability and organization in the system. It will also guarantee innovation throughout our health care system. Institutional planners will be able to move ahead with new projects without looking over their shoulder at creeping privatization. I know several projects that are now under way that will benefit from this clear path into the future of health care. Seniors, parents with small children and the rest of us are going to breathe sighs of relief, knowing that the council is taking a close look at factors like waiting times. No doubt this will result in reduced waiting times and schedules for treatments that we can all count on.

Bill 8 is a step, but only a step, forward in health care in Ontario. We have inherited fewer nurses per capita than any other province in Canada, ninth place for the number of family doctors per capita, eighth place for family health care expenditures per capita, and other problems.

Bill 8 will help, but we have a long way yet to go to fully fund and protect medicare. We will succeed. I quote from the preamble of the bill when I say that this government recognizes "that medicare—our system of publicly funded health services—reflects fundamental Canadian values and that its preservation is essential for the health of Ontarians now and in the future." I believe this strongly and I will work with my colleagues to build a system that is among the best in the world. Bill 8 will do more to ensure our system becomes even better. This is a bill for seniors, for children, for all of us.

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): I want to thank my colleague from Etobicoke Centre and pick up on a few of the points she made.

I think that when I've been listening to the debate tonight, the opposition has lost track of the basic thrust of the bill, which is to ban two-tier health care.

It reminds me of the election campaign. I was invited to go to an all-candidates meeting, which was actually sponsored by the Ontario Health Coalition. There was a panel and then the candidates. In the course of the evening, this little old lady put up her hand and said that this was her first political meeting. She was very nervous to be there. She was very nervous to ask a question, but what she couldn't understand was what the problem was with private health care. I listened to the chair of the meeting, the gentleman from the Ontario Health Coalition, and he started to quote studies. He started to talk about work that had been done in the United Kingdom about the cost of private health care versus public health care, and in the United States, and he gave this long, convoluted answer. It was my turn to speak, and I stood up and said, "Wait a minute. This isn't about studies; this isn't about statistics. This is about ownership. This is about the simple fact that all of us own our health care system, from the richest to the poorest."

It means that all of us—all of our constituents and everyone here in this Legislature this evening—have a stake in its future. We're going to fight for it, we're going to direct our taxes toward it and we're going to elect representatives who will support public health care. All of us are going to fight extremely passionately for our health care system.

I would argue that the greatest protection for our health care, what is going to protect it and augment it and improve it for us and our children for generations and when we're in the final days of our lives, when you spend most of your time in the health care system, is the fact that a millionaire with a broken arm sitting in an emergency room behind a homeless man is going to have to wait for that homeless man to be treated if that homeless man's injuries are more serious. That is the greatest protection of our health care system. We all have to work to fight to preserve public health care, which is why I'm supporting Bill 8.

The second goal of this bill is accountability. It's to help our minister implement a new approach to health care. As I said this afternoon when I was speaking on Bill 31, we unfortunately have a system where, too often, different aspects of our health care system compete with each other as opposed to complementing each other, as opposed to working together. One of the key ingredients of Bill 8 is an accountability framework which is going to ask the boards of directors of health institutions to come forward with plans so we can ensure that every cent spent by this government on health care goes to bring results, goes to bring better patient care. It's that kind of framework. I've spoken to the directors and CEOs of the hospitals in my riding. They're excited about this. They're willing to put their money where their mouth is and improve patient care and access and make sure our system works.

Our health care system is under a tremendous amount of pressure, and unless we have these types of agreements, unless we can, as the Minister of Health has said constantly, break down these silos and get different facets

of the health care system to work together, we're not going to have a bright future for health care. But I'm confident that through Bill 8, through a series of measures this government is taking through the leadership of the Minister of Health and the Premier, we're going to see a health care system that is second to none.

Bill 8 is an excellent piece of legislation that went forward to committee. The committee members worked with the various stakeholders to bring forward amendments to make sure it reflected their concerns. It's a package that I believe is going to make a difference. That's why I support Bill 8.

Mr O'Toole: Again, I'm surprised. They did have hearings on this. As I said before, our point person on the committee was the former health minister, Elizabeth Witmer, the member for Kitchener-Waterloo. Not one of her amendments—and Ms Martel, who is the critic for the NDP, moved a number of very acceptable and accommodating amendments; not one was accepted.

I encourage members of the public to read section 3 of the bill, which deals with accountability. In fact, sections 21 through to about 24 are mandatory reading.

Do you know what this does? In simple English, it gives the minister the ability to make regulations where he can force health care providers to do certain things in compliance. Under the accountability section, if they aren't in compliance or they're working on compliance and they fail to comply in 60 days, it's deemed to have been agreed to. Then, in section 24, I think, any person who has been wrongfully accused or had problems working through the agreement—it exempts the Minister of Health from any liability or exposure from the legal system, even to the point of having any legal action taken in any forum.

2030

It really forces the chief operating officer—for instance, of Lakeridge Health in Durham—if they don't comply and lay off the nurses, the minister can fine them up to \$50,000, I believe it is. There are a number of hip and knee replacements that won't be provided because Mr Smitherman won't listen.

I believe some of this accountability is very important, but what I want you to do, and I'm begging you this evening, is to hold further hearings on this bill and try to get it right. You are stampeding and running roughshod over the nurses, running roughshod over all the health care providers. I'm embarrassed for you.

Mr Prue: I rise to give my two minutes of comments, particularly to the member from Kitchener Center, because what he had to talk about was how the bill is going to help the health care system.

With respect, I think what we see in this bill, as we see in so many government bills, is the whole predisposition that by centralizing power in the minister's office, by making the minister accountable only to this Legislature, somehow things are going to be better in the hospitals, things are going to be better in the community care access centres, things are going to be better in the health centres and the long-term-care centres.

The reality is quite the opposite. As we centralize more and more power in the minister's office, in Queen's Park or in the bureaucracy located here in Toronto, that huge amount of resource, that huge amount of common knowledge in the local municipalities and local hospitals, is lost. We see that happening every day in municipalities. We are now going to see it, as a result of this bill, happening in our hospitals, our CCACs, our health centres and our long-term-care facilities. The reality is that this bill is going to give the minister power that he did not have before the bill, power to overtake and overrule the locally appointed hospital boards and commissions, the people who know the realities of their own communities, the people who know who are in the hospitals, who know the doctors and the needs of their communities. All of that is going to be centralized in the minister's office.

With respect, that is not the direction in which we should be heading. We should be giving people more and more say in how things happen in their local neighbourhoods.

Mr David Oraziotti (Sault Ste Marie): I rise this evening to give a brief two-minute comment on the member from Kitchener Centre, who very eloquently made remarks to the House with respect to our Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, Bill 8. I just want to clarify for the viewing public this evening that we are discussing Bill 8, the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act. Let me be absolutely clear: This is a very key component to our commitment to moving forward to improve health care in this province.

The Canada Health Act highlights a number of key principles: accessibility, comprehensiveness, universality, portability and administration. It doesn't address accountability. I have heard a number of Conservatives remark that this is a bill they would like to support and hopefully will support, and I am very pleased that our government is moving forward on this commitment, as well as many other commitments that our government has made, certainly during the election campaign.

If you take a look at the very brief six-month record, we have hired more water inspectors—

Mr Bisson: Broken promises.

Mr Oraziotti: No, not broken promises; all kinds of promises followed through on.

Interjections.

Mr Oraziotti: Listen: changing the Planning Act to give more decision-making to local municipalities; Bill 31, keeping our records safe; banning the school closures. Your government was closing schools. Releasing the report on mental health.

You wasted millions of dollars on self-promotional advertising. Our government introduced a law to ban partisan advertising.

Interjections.

Mr Oraziotti: I think I've hit a nerve here, Mr Speaker. I wonder why.

We've allowed the auditor to examine school boards, colleges, universities, hospitals and other crown corporations.

I'm very pleased with our government's record—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Yakabuski: I'm pleased to respond to the comments by the members from Etobicoke Centre and Kitchener Centre. I appreciate their contributions to the debate.

I have a letter here from the Arnprior and District Memorial Hospital in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Interjections.

Mr Yakabuski: Yes.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): They love Bill 8.

Mr Yakabuski: No, they don't. Sorry. It's addressed to the minister:

"Dear Minister Smitherman:

"I am writing to express the Arnprior and District Memorial Hospital Corp's concern about Bill 8.

"As currently written, Bill 8 appears to grant government the power to bypass hospital boards, the people who know the most about the hospital and the services it provides to the community."

What we've been saying all along, Garfield, as a matter of fact. One thing that separates us from the people on the other side is—

Mr Dunlop: Accountability.

Interjection: Numbers.

Mr Yakabuski: —the willingness to admit when we've made an error. My good colleague from Oak Ridges engaged in the debate this evening and was erroneously speaking on the wrong bill, but he immediately stood up at the first opportunity and said, "You know what? I made a mistake." That is what this government needs to do with regard to Bill 8. It's not too late, ladies and gentlemen. Get up and say, "We've made a mistake. We're willing to swallow our pride and start this over."

But let me finish with the letter from the Arnprior and District Hospital Corp.

Interjection.

Interjection: Alfonso apologized.

Mr Yakabuski: "We believe further changes should be made to the bill to sufficiently safeguard the critical role of community governance of hospitals.

"Our specific concerns are:

"Although a reference to negotiated accountability agreements has been included, the legislation still permits these agreements to be imposed after a period of 60 days."

"Imposed," that's the word.

Mr O'Toole: Forced.

Mr Yakabuski: Forced. Yes, I'm sorry, forced.

Mr O'Toole: Forced compliance.

Mr Yakabuski: Mr Speaker, I'm not going to be able to finish this letter, but I will get to it at another time. Thank you for the indulgence, sir.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Milloy: I want to thank my colleagues for their various comments, especially my colleague from Sault Ste Marie.

Reference was made to the committee process. I had the pleasure of sitting in as a substitute on the committee for one day and saw a group of individuals who were willing to work, listen to stakeholders and move forward with the types of amendments which would meet their concerns. I think the impressive list of amendments that were returned by the committee is testament to that.

I myself had a chance to meet with hospitalists in my riding; that is, individuals who work part-time at the hospital treating patients who don't have a family doctor. They are paid partially by OHIP and partially by the hospital. They had concerns about Bill 8. I brought them to the minister and the minister's office explained that wasn't the intention of Bill 8 and, further, in committee the amendments were brought forward. It's that type of accommodation, that type of improvement contained within the bill which I think is a real testament to the committee process and this government's willingness to move forward.

The second issue that was brought forward, particularly by the member from Beaches-East York and the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, had to do with this whole interfering with local hospitals, this myth that this bill is somehow designed to do that. Rather, I would say this bill should be characterized as a challenge to local hospitals and local health institutions to do better, deliver responsibly and work out a plan for the future.

Our health care system is in a very tenuous situation, and without the planning and agreements we're talking about, we are not going to see it survive or thrive and flourish. That's what is so key about this bill, that these types of agreements are an opportunity, as I said earlier, for these institutions to put their money where their mouth is and move forward with a real plan.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr O'Toole: Read the letter. I want to hear that letter.

Mr Yakabuski: I gave it in. I'm going to have to get it back. I don't have it right now, but when I retrieve that letter, I will read the rest of it, John.

Interjection.

Mr Yakabuski: Yes, I do, Mike. Bill 8, right?

Interjection: That's it.

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Mr Yakabuski: A number of speakers on this bill have noted how hard it is to know where to start. For someone looking for flaws or dangers in a piece of legislation, Bill 8 is like striking the motherlode. There is an embarrassment of riches here.

However, I also have to give the minister some credit here. He obviously has a fine sense of humour. When he stood up on the day this bill was introduced and promised that it would make medicare the law in Ontario, how can we not laugh at that? The minister knows full well that publicly funded and administered health care is already the law in Ontario, just as it is everywhere else in

Canada. It is called the Canada Health Act. I urge the minister to read that someday.

An Ontario law that replicates the federal law is meaningless except as a piece of political theatre. What this government has done is set up a straw target, an easy political objective they can rant and rave about and appear to be resolving. It makes them look good in the public eye and allows them to avoid the difficult and expensive work of tackling the real challenges in health care.

If this minister and his government were truly serious about preserving and protecting medicare in Ontario, they would be prepared to take some real action. They would be setting standards for themselves for levels of funding and other resources and for health care outcomes. They would be taking responsibility and making themselves accountable. Instead, we have empty words and silly legislation. Bill 8 is simply wallpaper over the holes in the wall.

My honourable friends across the way are also making a fundamental error when it comes to two-tier medicine. They are assuming it is a disease in Ontario's health care system, when it is actually the symptom. If you want to eliminate two-tier medicine, you must eliminate the need for it. It doesn't exist in a vacuum. Private clinics in the US and elsewhere have Ontario clients for a reason. Ontarians sometimes pay for care because they feel they have no choice. People across Ontario report that they cannot get access to a family physician. You hear Ontarians everywhere complaining about the waiting lists for diagnostics and treatment. When you can't get the medical care you need when and where you need it, you are being denied access to the health care system. That is against the principles of the Canada Health Act, the law that is supposed to guarantee all of us and our families the access we need.

However, there is a large and growing gap between the theory of that law and the reality for individuals and families. The lack of access is the single biggest factor driving people to other jurisdictions for health care. It is also behind the growing public acceptance of the idea of two-tier medicine. You will find more and more people to at least consider this concept because they feel the public system is failing to meet their needs. They simply can't get the care that is required.

So if the minister wants to be the superhero and defeat this two-tier monster, which we are all in favour of, he won't be able to do it with a press release. The minister is acting like the ancient king in the legend who tries to command the sea to roll back. He can yell as loud as he wants, but it won't keep the tide down. If this minister truly wants this legislation to protect medicare, he is going to have to tackle the real, substantive reasons behind this problem and do something to improve access to health care. This bill does not address it. We don't need a second law making medicare the system of choice; we need real support for the existing law, the Canada Health Act. We don't need more regulation and more power for the minister; we need more funding and

more effective use of public resources: more doctors and nurses to treat Ontario families, more hospitals and clinics where the demand is greatest.

There is nothing, not a word or an idea, to address these changes in Bill 8. There is nothing in this legislation to address the waiting lists that are the most common form of access denial. There is nothing here to hold the government accountable for providing sufficient funding and support. There is nothing that would actually increase access to health care. It seems that this legislation is so obsessed with cracking down on any extra payments or the slightest hint of two-tier medicine, the government so focused on this one side of the equation that it has completely forgotten the other side: increasing access.

Bill 8 has an entire section dedicated to health care accessibility, but all it contains are new regulations to clamp down on health care providers and administrators, and broad new powers for the Minister of Health. It contains nothing about ensuring that the public system has the resources it needs to do the job.

When the Ontario Medical Association looked over Bill 8, they saw the same credibility gap between the words used by the minister and the actual contents of the legislation. The association pointed this out in its presentation to committee, and I quote: "This bill has nothing to do with improving accessibility since it ignores the real problems in the system: chronic underfunding and a lack of resources."

I think that sums it up very well. Bill 8 has nothing to do with improving accessibility. Bill 8 ignores the real problems in the system. Again, Bill 8 ignores the great contribution to the system by our hospital boards.

I haven't got my letter back, but I also have a letter here from the chief executive officer of the Arnprior and district hospital:

"Dear Mr Yakabuski,

"This is concerning the Arnprior and District Memorial Hospital's concerns about Bill 8.

"As you probably know, the government is proposing measures in Bill 8 that have the potential to undermine local voluntary hospital governance that may or may not be in the public interest.

"Accompanying this are letters from our board chair describing ADMH's specific concerns and from the Ontario Hospital Association presenting a broader provincial perspective."

In respect for those volunteers at the Arnprior hospital board, at Deep River and all of the boards that I have spoken to in my riding, I move for the adjournment of debate—adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of this motion, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2047 to 2117.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please rise.

All those opposed to the motion, please rise.

The motion is lost.

Further debate?

Mr Yakabuski: The 30 minutes have given me the opportunity to regain my composure. I was quite upset—upset, but honoured to stand here and fight for volunteerism across the province.

Let me finish the letter from the chairman of the board of the Arnprior and District Memorial Hospital Corp:

"The bill gives the minister extensive powers to issue a broad range of compliance directives and orders against the board without referring the matter to third-party dispute resolution.

Mr Fonseca: Still on Bill 8.

Mr Yakabuski: This is Bill 8.

"This bill provides the government with the authority to issue orders directly against hospital leaders, which undermines the role of the board. This is not acceptable.

"We urge you to reconsider the bill in its current form and implement these suggested changes.

"Sincerely,

"Harold Camblin, Chair."

Those people are the backbone of the organizations which make our hospitals among the finest in the world. This bill is to say to those people, "You're no longer necessary. We want you there but only if you're going to do our bidding, and if your goals are not in perfect step with my goals as the Minister of Health, then I'm going to tell you, Madam and Mr Board, you're going to be overruled. You're going to be overruled because the Minister of Health has the ultimate power in this province." That is quite a message to volunteers. Is this volunteer month?

Mr Dunlop: Yes.

Mr Yakabuski: That is quite a message to volunteers across this wonderful province. This bill needs to be seriously reviewed or withdrawn.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: That was funny. That was good. If only the members watching in the audience could know what the little heckles are on the side. Sometimes they're quite amusing.

I just want to put on the record a couple of points that I think need to be put in regard to this bill. The title of the bill talks about trying to protect medicare. As a New Democrat, I'm all in favour of the title of the bill. All Canadians, as all Ontarians, believe that medicare is probably one of the programs that define us as Canadians. At the end of the day, all political parties in this Legislature should do all we can, as in the federal House, to protect the principles of medicare.

But the problem is, as I look at the bill, that there is nothing in here really to enhance the principles of medicare. For example, remember the Tories? They were there for eight years: 1995-99 and 1999-2003. It was like a bit of a bad dream, but I remember. I was there. These

guys tried to privatize hospitals. Remember the P3s? Remember the government went out and did these private-public partnership things, where they tried to say that a public hospital was going to become a private hospital? I look at this Bill 8 that the Liberal government has brought forward, and there's nothing to prevent P3s from being created. The government, as I see it, is trying to call P3s anything else, but in reality they're still P3s.

I look at other principles of this bill, and one that gets me is they want to create these quality control councils—I think that's what they're called; I may have the term wrong—but there are no teeth within the legislation to give the council the ability to hold the Minister of Health accountable to the principles within the medicare act we have federally. It's really nice to have a title of a bill that says, "Feel good; feel warm; health care is such a great thing." But I think you should put something in the bill that makes it go that way.

The other point I just want to make very quickly in the last couple of seconds I have is that the hospital boards and administrators are upset about this bill—I think for good reason—and we should listen to what they have to say.

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I am proud to speak in support of Bill 8. I am also very glad to have the opportunity to help inform the member for Beaches-East York that we are moving very aggressively to hire nurses; in fact, 400 to 500 full-time positions have already been created, and that is just a start. We are also moving aggressively to help foreign-trained doctors to practise in Ontario, among other professionals.

But Bill 8 is about accountability, something Ontarians want, expect and are demanding. We are talking about \$30 billion a year that is spent on health care. That is a huge amount of money. It's the single biggest expenditure of this government. The people obviously want to have accountability for any money that is spent, but when you're talking about \$30 billion, that's pretty obvious.

This bill is not an attack on hospital boards; it is not an attack on workers. Everybody in this House, most of all the government side of this House, appreciates the hard work of everybody in our hospitals and everybody in our health care system, particularly the boards as well. So this is not an attack. What this is is a support for our system, a clarification and an understanding. It's an understanding that we're developing so that everybody is on the same page: we all know what we want, and we're all heading for the same goal. That's something that's happening in businesses all over the place. Sometimes they're called mission statements. Whatever it is, it's an understanding that we all have the same goals and we are working toward those.

If this bill is still at all flawed, I know our government has proven that it's open to input. We've taken it on the road. We've made amendments, and, if necessary, we'll do that again.

Mr Dunlop: I am pleased to rise this evening to say a few words on the comments of my friend Mr Yakabuski, who made some very important comments.

I think one of the most important comments I heard just came from the last speaker, Jennifer Mossop. The member from Stoney Creek mentioned that you are now a government that is about to spend, this year, \$30 billion. We talk about the slashing and burning of the Tories. We came to power with \$16.9 billion: in 1995 \$16.9 billion was being spent on health care, and now we're at \$30 billion a year.

The fact of the matter is, we tried to make numerous changes, but at the same time over \$10 billion a year has been added to health care spending. That, ladies and gentlemen and people in the province of Ontario, is with the fact that our buddy, the guy who is running the country right now, Mr Paul Martin, slashed billions of dollars out of the health care system in our country. That is how he balanced the federal deficit, and we've never been back to that level. Mr Romanow pointed that out, that we need more money from the federal government, and we're expecting it.

I am sorry he disappointed you this year in the budget. Only \$700 million flowed; it should have been \$3 billion or \$4 billion from the federal side. That's what's happened here. We just have not had that money come from the federal government.

Mr Speaker, I really appreciate the opportunity. We will not be supporting Bill 8. Okay? I speak for Mr Klees as well.

Mr Prue: I hear the dichotomous arguments coming out of my friends from the Conservative Party. I listened to the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

I was trained politically many years ago that in every speech you listen to you can always hear in 10 minutes at least one kernel of truth. In fact, I did hear one kernel of truth, and that was when he got into the whole argument of what is happening with the volunteer boards of directors in some of the hospitals. That is the kernel of truth, and I think the Achilles heel of this whole bill, because we as a Legislature should be protecting that great resource. We should be telling them how great they are from their communities, how they understand their neighbourhoods and the local needs of the hospitals or of the CCACs. We should be saluting and upholding that, not taking away the rights and giving them to ministerial prerogative.

When I heard that, I thought he had something to say. I do know about the history of that party from before, and we all know about what they tried to do.

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): It was a nightmare.

Mr Prue: It was a nightmare. But then I had to listen to the comments, and I heard the member from Stoney Creek, who said succinctly what this bill really is. I don't think she believed that she was doing any harm when she made the statement, but she said this bill is a mere mission statement. For those who wonder what a mission statement is, it's sort of a direction that you are heading in, but it really doesn't mean much. It's ethereal, airy-fairy, it doesn't mean anything; in fact, that's the reality of this bill: it doesn't mean anything. It is a mere mission

statement of where this government wants to go. It is no different than a throne speech.

The Acting Speaker: Response from the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr Yakabuski: I want to thank the members for Timmins-James Bay, Stoney Creek, my colleague from Simcoe North and, as usual, the gentleman from Beaches-East York for their comments this evening—and I'm grateful that he could find a kernel of something in anybody's speeches but his own. I'm agreeing with him, because it is a point that must be reiterated over and over again. We're here fighting for volunteers. Small communities are built on their volunteers. It's not just our hospital board volunteers but all of those volunteers from all of those other organizations that support those hospitals in our small communities: the members of the Lions Club and the Rotary and the Kiwanis and the Civitan and the Legion, those veterans who fought for

our country, who now want to make sure that our communities are better communities to live in. They support our hospitals, and they support those members of our hospital boards. They want the members of those hospital boards to take ownership of those hospitals on their behalf, because communities own those hospitals. We will not release that ownership to the Minister of Health simply because he's on a power-hungry mission to control the province. We will not do that. Those community boards must be left with their dignity so that they can stand and continue to serve their communities, because without those hospital boards our health care system is far more threatened than we even thought before.

The Acting Speaker: It being 9:30 pm, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 pm tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2131.

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Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Tuesday 6 April 2004

Mardi 6 avril 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 6 April 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 6 avril 2004

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ADAMS MINE

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):

Yesterday we witnessed the introduction of the curiously titled Adams Mine Lake Act. I say "curious," because before yesterday no one knew it was a lake; they thought it was a mine. This magical transformation of a mine into a lake is part and parcel of the illusion Liberals are trying to create to hide what I consider the power-grabbing, dictatorial nature of this bill, which in the flourish of a pen will sign away property rights, hit taxpayers with compensation costs and impose a redefinition of the word "lake" on the province of Ontario. In the spirit of undemocratic redefinition, I will be referring to this bill as the "no landfill in Liberal ridings act."

I was listening to the environment minister yesterday, and it made me wonder if that minister of the crown, or anyone on that side of the House for that matter, believes that landowners, property owners, farmers or iron ore miners in Ontario should have property rights. When a government can come in and retroactively trash the legal rights of a property owner, it speaks to the lack of property rights here in Ontario. I wasn't aware that Liberal democratic renewal included the trashing of basic democratic rights. I do realize the Minister of the Environment has the power to take away water permits; I was unaware the minister has the power to take away land, property and legal rights.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I rise today to report on my experience visiting four schools, three in my area and York University. I took the challenge of the Minister of Education, the Honourable Gerard Kennedy, to visit and have a personal experience. I visited a special-needs school, the Zareinu Educational Centre of Metropolitan Toronto. I also visited Vaughan Secondary School, St Robert Catholic High School and York University, for a short time.

I was pleased to experience some of what the students go through in their daily lives. One of the things that struck me significantly was the respect the schools,

teachers and principals have for our Minister of Education. There were very positive comments on what he is doing and what he is attempting to achieve. That, in my opinion, will assist us in doing what we intend to do.

Also, there were comments about portables. In my area, a growing area, there are too many portables. There is also a lack of computers. We need more funding to buy equipment within the education system and we need more funding to buy books, but we also need more funding for transportation so our kids will be able to go to specialty classes, whether it be sports or music or other subjects. Overall, there is a positive mood that we will be able to make major improvements in the education system, and I'm pleased to report that.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): In recent months, Ontarians learned that the word of our Premier is meaningless, and now it looks as though his signature is equally meaningless. That signature is on an explicit taxpayers' federation election pledge to balance the budget, a goal that could have been achieved if the government had lifted its finger to even try. But when it comes to setting budget priorities, Mr McGuinty would rather play the politics of spin than make the tough decisions he said he could make.

You will hear excuses. It will be said that Ontarians told the so-called budget consultations that they don't want efficiencies found. But the kangaroo consultations were designed to produce only such an answer. You will hear a lot of political spin about a structural deficit. But the government's only plan to address this phantom is to post a deficit that's as bloated as possible.

Therefore, I want to draw attention to a key aspect of the balanced budget law: the pay cuts for any cabinet that fails to balance the budget. As we return to the era of tax, spend and borrow economics, we'll be seeking guarantees from every minister opposite that they will receive no stipend or salary supplement from the Liberal Party to offset the richly deserved salary penalties they will incur as a result of bringing to this province a deficit which is unnecessary to burden the people of this province.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): Shortly after forming government in November 2003, Premier McGuinty asked me to conduct broad-based consultations to determine how our government might better protect women and children from violence. Our goal: to restart a constructive dialogue, long absent at

Queen's Park, under the thoughtful direction and determined leadership of the Premier—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Could you please wait?

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to question whether or not it's appropriate for the parliamentary assistant, the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, to make a statement at this time.

The Speaker: I'm not quite sure if the member is making a statement of policy within her jurisdiction. Could I hear the statement first? I cannot rule on this unless I know it is in that direction. Then we can make a decision if it is out of order or not.

Ms Broten: Perhaps if my friend opposite had listened to what I was about to say, he wouldn't have concerns. I will start again.

Shortly after forming government in November 2003, Premier McGuinty asked me to conduct broad-based consultations to determine how our government might better protect women and children from violence. Our goal: to restart a constructive dialogue, long absent at Queen's Park, under the thoughtful direction and determined leadership of the Premier—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I think the member was making a correct point of order. I think that's within the jurisdiction the Premier had asked you to do, within that policy area, and you are the parliamentary assistant for that. So I would regard that as not being a statement coming from you. I'll have to pass on that one.

1340

POVERTY

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It wasn't too long ago that Toronto liked to say of itself that it was a world-class city. It wasn't too long ago that the late Peter Ustinov called Toronto "New York run by the Swiss." It wasn't too long ago that people came from all around the world to study a unique government, to study our neighbourhoods and to study the social and cultural integration that people come to expect of Toronto.

But the last 10 years have not been kind to the city of Toronto. Yesterday, the United Way released a study called Poverty by Postal Code. In Poverty by Postal Code, they talk about the number of neighbourhoods that are now living in poverty. In the last 20 years, we have gone from some 30 neighbourhoods where the majority of people live in poverty to up to 120 today. This has been disproportionate to all other municipalities in Ontario and to those who live in those poor neighbourhoods—primarily new immigrants and visible minorities.

This government has an obligation to look after the Queen City. This government has an obligation to build housing, to look to redress the welfare and ODSP rates and to have programs to help our newest Canadians. We are looking forward to this government doing exactly that in the upcoming budget debate.

TARTAN DAY

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Members' statements, the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka. It's déjà vu.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Perhaps my jacket has already brought enough attention to this fact, but I rise today in celebration of Tartan Day. The tartan is an important symbol of Scottish heritage and it is with pride that I wear this tartan jacket.

My mother, Anne McArthur Norman, was born in Whiteinch, Scotland, just outside of Glasgow. My father, Frank Stuart Miller, wore this same tartan jacket in this very Legislature many times in the past, particularly on the special occasion of introducing the Ontario budget.

This particular tartan is the Royal Stuart tartan. It was sold by Garwoods of Muskoka on the main street of beautiful Bracebridge. The Royal Stuart tartan is that of the Queen and wearing it was traditionally seen as a sign of loyalty to the crown or to the Royal Stuart line. In 1746, an act of Parliament imposed a ban on the tartan in an attempt to stamp out the culture, which was seen by the Hanovarian government as the power base for the House of Stuart. As you can see, they were unsuccessful and this important cultural symbol lives on to this very day.

However, today I wear this tartan not only in honour of Tartan Day and in recognition of Scotland's rich cultural heritage but also in memory of my father. My father was well known for wearing this tartan jacket and in fact used a tartan button in his successful 1985 leadership bid.

In conclusion, I would like to add that my father's tartan collection does not end here. I am also fortunate enough to have his equally stylish turquoise Muskoka tartan, but I will save that for next year.

Happy Tartan Day.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): For a moment, I thought it was Frank Miller himself.

SIKH SCRIPTURES

Mr Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It's my pleasure to rise today to speak about a historic event which took place this past weekend. On Sunday, 149 copies of the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh religion's highest spiritual authority, arrived in Canada. The scriptures were airlifted from the Sikh Golden Temple in Amritsar. This is the holy city of Sikhs and the only place where these scriptures are printed.

Their arrival was the culmination of efforts by the Sacha Sauda Gurmat Parchar Society, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, SkyLink Aviation Inc and the Sikh community. Some 200 Sikhs joyously celebrated the holy books' arrival at Pearson International Airport.

The Guru Granth Sahib, also known as the Adi Granth, is the only scripture of its kind that contains the works from the religion's founders, along with works

from other faiths, which is why it is only fitting that they came to Canada, a nation known for its religious diversity and social inclusion.

The day before yesterday was a tremendous day for the Sikh faith.

The Sikh community in Canada is working hard to establish a printing facility here where the holy books can be printed according to religious specifications. This would be a phenomenal accomplishment for the Sikh community in Canada and worldwide.

On behalf of the Legislature, I congratulate the Sikh community on this successful first delivery.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I rise in the House today to express my disappointment and my constituents' dismay with the bill introduced yesterday by Environment Minister Leona Dombrowsky. The Adams Mine Lake Act, 2004, will prohibit the controversial Adams mine from ever being used as a landfill, but it will do absolutely nothing to stop landfills like site 41 in my own riding of Simcoe North.

The Liberals tried to pull the wool over our eyes. They included the Adams mine announcement with several other environmental initiatives just so they could disguise the real issue. The announcement was made to stop a fellow minister from resigning.

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Who started the process?

Mr Dunlop: To the Minister of Agriculture, just remember Walkerton, would you?

I respectfully submit that this legislation is all about Liberals helping Liberals, and nothing more. Let's not forget that the Minister of Natural Resources threatened to resign last fall if he didn't get his way on the Adams mine landfill. Minister Dombrowsky has expressed her passion for clean water time and time again. If she meant what she said, she should have used yesterday's opportunity to also help stop landfills like site 41, not just a landfill that's located in a Liberal riding. As the Minister of the Environment, Leona Dombrowsky is supposed to represent all Ontarians on environmental issues. She previously announced a moratorium on all new and expanded water-taking permits, so why didn't she announce a moratorium on all new landfill construction?

In her statement to the Ontario Legislature yesterday, Minister Dombrowsky said, about the Adams mine landfill proposal, "The key approvals for this proposal came before the Walkerton tragedy." She also said, "The proposed legislation would revoke all existing approvals for the Adams mine landfill..." In fact, she did an order in council.

The key approvals for site 41 also came before the Walkerton tragedy, so I fully expect legislation to be forthcoming from the minister that revokes all existing approvals for the site 41 landfill.

PASSOVER

Mr David Zimmer (Willowdale): I rise today in recognition of those Ontarians celebrating the holy Jewish holiday of Passover. Passover marks the Jewish people's historic struggle to free themselves from slavery under the rule of the Pharaohs, their exodus in the desert, and Moses's subsequent receiving of the Torah from God atop Mount Sinai.

While Passover marks the birth of the Jewish nation, its message speaks to all of us in its celebration of freedom. In Ontario and in Canada, we live in a society that values freedom and celebrates diversity.

The Jewish community in my riding and other parts of Ontario and Canada has recently been distressed and saddened by hateful actions against them. Sadly, other religious communities have also been targeted. Events like those that happened in Montreal the other day are appalling, and I know all members of this House stand with me when we condemn them.

As Premier McGuinty has said, an attack on any one of us is an attack on all of us. We stand together with the Jewish community in this trying time. The Jewish community must continue to celebrate its heritage and freedom even as it struggles against attacks on freedom. Passover marks this celebration.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list of private members' public business: Mr Leal and Mr Colle exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Colle assumes ballot item 39 and Mr Leal assumes ballot item 14.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent? Yes.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that Mr Leal and Mr Colle exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Colle assumes ballot item 39 and Mr Leal assumes ballot item 14.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Tuesday, April 6, 2004, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, say "aye."

All those against?

I think the ayes have it.
 There will be a five-minute bell.
The division bells rang from 1351 to 1356.
The Speaker: Order.
 All those in favour, please rise.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Fonseca, Peter	Patten, Richard
Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Baird, John R.	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Pupatello, Sandra
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Qaadi, Shafiq
Bentley, Christopher	Hudak, Tim	Racco, Mario G.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramal, Khalil
Bountrogianni, Marie	Klees, Frank	Ramsay, David
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Rinaldi, Lou
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Runciman, Robert W.
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Marsales, Judy	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Sorbara, Greg
Cordiano, Joseph	Mauro, Bill	Sterling, Norman W.
Craiton, Kim	McGuinty, Dalton	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Miller, Norm	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Milloy, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duguid, Brad	Mitchell, Carol	Wong, Tony C.
Duncan, Dwight	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dunlop, Garfield	Oraziotti, David	Yakabuski, John
Eves, Ernie	Quellette, Jerry J.	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Parsons, Ernie	

The Speaker: All those against, please rise.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael
Kormos, Peter	Martel, Shelley	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 77; the nays are 5.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

WEARING OF YELLOW RIBBONS

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: April is generally regarded as the month when we recognize the scourge of cancer in our society. I rise to seek permission of the House for the wearing of a yellow ribbon in this House during the month of April.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Unanimous consent has been requested to wear the yellow ribbon. Is that the pleasure of the House? Okay.

1400

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**VIOLENCE FAMILIALE**

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I rise to inform the House of the

action that our government is taking to protect women and children by fighting domestic violence. You will know, Mr Speaker, that we are committed to building strong and safe communities. Well, a community is only as safe as the homes within it, and too often women and children face violence and fear in their very own homes. A community is only as strong as the support it offers the most vulnerable people within it, and too often the victims of domestic violence lack the supports they need to escape from that violence.

Nous croyons que chaque personne dans notre province a le droit fondamental de vivre en paix et en sécurité. Chacun de nous a l'obligation de travailler ensemble pour assurer cette paix et cette sécurité.

Each and every person in this province of ours has the fundamental right to live in peace and security. Each of us has an obligation to work together to ensure that peace and security.

So today I'm announcing that our new government is taking a new approach. The Ontario government will be tough on abusers—abuse will not be tolerated—but it will no longer focus almost exclusively on criminal justice while neglecting the supports that victims need and the prevention that must be put in place.

I want to acknowledge and pay tribute to my parliamentary assistant, Laurel Brotten, the MPP for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, who has met with front-line workers and experts from across the province to identify needed reforms. Her excellent work has provided the foundation for our government's plan. We've been told time and time again that we need a balanced approach, that we must go after the abuser but we must stop leaving the victims behind.

Today I'm announcing the first steps in a long-term approach that will better protect women and children. Once women leave abusive relationships, one of their greatest needs is to be supported in safe housing. This is essential to establishing lives that are free of violence. So we are announcing today \$3.5 million in additional funding to invest in second-stage housing community supports. This is long overdue, and it is badly needed.

We know from tragic experience that we must do a better job of intervening early to protect women and children before it's too late. We are funding a pilot project on a risk-assessment tool that will lead to improved training and support for police officers, crown attorneys and others working in the criminal justice system. This will help these people to better assess risk in abusive situations.

We need to continue to work together to fight domestic violence, so we are going to hold a provincial conference on domestic violence, bringing together community leaders, experts and service providers so they can share best practices, especially best practices when it comes to preventing violence and providing better supports to victims.

We're also establishing a new ministerial steering committee on domestic violence, chaired by the Minister of Community and Social Services and minister respon-

sible for women's issues, Sandra Papatello, which will lead a continuing fight against domestic violence. Most importantly, we need to break the intergenerational cycle of violence, especially when we know that boys who observe their fathers abuse are 1,000 times more likely to become abusers themselves, and especially since we know that girls who observe their mothers being abused are much more likely to become victims themselves.

So we're going to invest \$4.9 million in a four-year public education and awareness campaign. It will be targeting children and youth. It will be aimed at mobilizing communities across Ontario to break the cycle of violence.

These are significant steps that represent a change in attitude and approach by the Ontario government. They are steps in the right direction, yet they are first steps. Our work will and must continue until the violence ends; until women and children in Ontario no longer live in fear; until our communities and the people who live in them are truly safe, not just from the violence we see on our streets, but from the more insidious violence that happens behind closed doors.

Hon Sandra Papatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): Thank you so much for this opportunity. In speaking on this very important issue, let me start today by telling you how pleased we are to have joining us in the gallery Margot Franssen, the owner of the Body Shop Canada; if she wouldn't mind standing for us. The Body Shop has raised over \$1 million for violence prevention programs. We're very pleased to have this Order of Canada recipient here in our midst today.

Beverly Wybrow is here. She's the executive director of the Canadian Women's Foundation, the only national organization working for girls and women, which funds 300 violence prevention programs. Thank you so much for coming today.

This is a very important day for us, for our government and for every member in this House. What we need to do is to put the people who issue the coroner's report out of business. The next time a woman is being flung across the room, worrying more about whether her children will be safe or if her children saw this—this government has to move ahead; they have got to give this woman options. They've got to help with that Herculean effort to get her out the door and know that there will be supports in place for these women to get back on their feet. I can't think of a more focused effort than what we will have in this government.

I'm very pleased to chair a task force amongst our ministers, where I get to work with the Minister of Children and Youth Services to determine how we break that cycle of violence when young boys and young girls are witnessing violence; how we can focus such a prevention campaign to target women, in particular, in the aboriginal community and new Canadian women, whose numbers in terms of domestic violence are skyrocketing. This is the kind of prevention campaign that we have to focus on with a real effort. We hope we'll have all of us here in this House supporting these efforts.

My leader spoke about the risk assessment tool. Why is that so important? It's important because the inquest that provided us with recommendation after recommendation told us that we have ways to stop the abusers from being free when they pose a significantly high threat and high risk of reoffending. That's how we ended up with women being murdered in this province. We've got to stop that.

Let me say too that, above all this, all of us in this House will do well to follow our leader's footsteps in this, because we have a passion for this issue. We understand that we cannot have women in Ontario who fear being in their own homes, who don't know how they will make ends meet. We have had report after report after report, in particular in these last couple of weeks, and they have really honed the arguments for us to say how we as a government can step in.

Probably the most significant part of this announcement today is getting our government back in the business of second-stage housing. This is probably the most significant part because once that woman has landed at the door of the shelter, a broken woman, we need to put supports in the form of counselling services around these women who often are so traumatized they don't know where to turn. How will they find housing? What will happen to their kids? Will their kids get to school the next day? These are the things that this kind of supportive housing will identify and help with. What we're saying today to all people in Ontario is, it is unacceptable to see domestic violence and not be able to interject and find these women support. I am so pleased to be a part of a McGuinty government that is moving forward in this manner.

1410

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I do appreciate the announcement that's been made today on this issue of violence against women and the actions that governments take to prevent violence against women and their children. I look at it as a non-partisan issue, and I truly believe that all members of this House—all 103 and all three parties—have worked diligently to move forward to create an environment that continues to take action against this violence.

We know that violence against women continues to be a very serious problem, not just in this province but throughout the world. It continues to be persistent, far-reaching and severe. In fact, the consequences and cost of violence to women themselves, to their children and to our economies, in terms of medical, psychological and economic impacts, are high; it's an estimated \$4.2 billion.

But again, I think all governments have worked hard. I know we did. We took steps to help prevent domestic violence. We did make very substantial improvements to Ontario's system of supports for victims. We committed resources to address violence against women. In fact, the expenditures increased by about 70% from 1995. We spent over \$160 million in the areas of safety, justice and prevention. We provided money to shelter beds, coun-

selling, telephone crisis services, specialized domestic violence courts, crisis intervention, personal safety planning and a 24-hour-a-day, province-wide crisis line. I know the actions we took built upon the actions that had been taken by the NDP government before us. But it's never enough, because the violence continues.

I want to take a look at two of the programs we introduced, where we contributed \$5 million. One of these programs was a \$5-million transitional support program that assists women in identifying and accessing the resources and supports they need, including housing. There was another \$5-million program that was an early intervention program for child witnesses of domestic violence, which helps our children recover from the effects of witnessing violence in their families.

Then, if I look forward, in December 2002 we committed another \$21.4 million to new initiatives to support victims but also to hold abusers accountable. Some of this money went into these areas: There was \$5 million to enhance the safety, accessibility and security of shelters for abused women and their children. There was \$5 million for a public education and prevention campaign to engage all Ontarians in helping to prevent domestic violence against women and children. There was a \$4.5-million program over three years for community-based grants to strengthen the linkages between local victim services in order that we could improve service delivery to the victims of domestic violence. There was \$2.7 million for safe, private waiting and interview areas for victims and witnesses as part of the expansion of the domestic violence court program.

There was also \$2.4 million for a specialized domestic violence bail program to help the police and crown attorneys better protect the victims of domestic violence. Trained staff were made available to interview victims before bail hearings to get all the available information to better assess the risk to victims in domestic violence cases.

Then there was \$1.2 million for a domestic violence review committee in the office of the chief coroner, bringing together specialists and community experts who will review all domestic violence deaths. Finally, there was \$600,000 to bring together domestic violence experts, community leaders and service providers in order that, by bringing all these people together as you are proposing to do, we can all look at strategies; we can use the expertise and the ideas that everyone has available. We were going to bring that forward to have regional and provincial conferences in order that we could further improve services. So I'm glad for the announcement today, and I applaud you.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): The first thing I'd like to say is that we're very happy to see the election promise being kept today—I think that's the first or second—and that is bringing back funding for second-stage housing today. It was a very important step forward, and I know that women's organizations and victims of violence are very glad for this announcement today. We have to bear in mind that about 25 buildings

across the province were shut down. They're still there as housing, downloaded to the municipalities, but the services were taken away. What you're announcing today is putting those services, which are critical, back in. We're happy to see that and hope you will expand them.

As you well know from the study that came out yesterday, *Walking on Eggshells*, from the cross-sectoral group and its recommendations—which the Premier, then the leader of the official opposition, signed on to—and many, many reports that have come before this House over the years and from the various inquests after the horrible deaths of women—we know what we have to do. That report yesterday, *Walking on Eggshells*, told us again, reiterated again and again, what to do.

I'm somewhat concerned that this is all we're hearing today, particularly given your commitment when in opposition to all of those things that we know we have to do to stop this violence, and by the fact that there is nothing, for instance, today about the first-stage shelters, which we know were cut under the previous government by 5% or more across the board. They are falling apart. There isn't enough room in second-stage housing across the province for all of these women and children to get that counselling. There's not enough room in the existing system. We need those cuts that were made to the shelters to not only be reinstated, but we need more funding for those shelters and services.

As a result of the report issued yesterday, which was truly heartbreaking, Premier, and I hope you will have a look at it—welfare rates were cut by the previous government. It's now about a 34% cut in real dollars. These women are supposed to be trying to leave violent situations on that amount of money. We need a commitment to those welfare rates right away, and we need a commitment to affordable housing right away. Those are the kinds of things that, in particular, we heard about yesterday. We heard that 20% or more of the cases of children being brought into care in 2003—can you believe it?—were because of lack of housing. So on one hand your government has expanded the money to the child welfare system by about \$84 million. We support more money to protect children. But in the meantime you see that 20% of these children are being taken away from their mothers after experiencing a violent situation because they have no place to live. So the child welfare system gets extra funding to take these children away—and God bless, they need to be protected.

Premier, what we want to see in the upcoming budget is a real commitment to reinstate an awful lot of the cuts that were made and things you promised when you were in opposition. You signed on to this cross-sectoral strategy. You asked impassioned questions and spoke the way I am speaking today, sometimes quite tearfully, emotionally and passionately, about this issue being one that, as the member for the opposition said, is not and should not be partisan. But it becomes partisan when promises are made and we get all of these reports and nothing is done except small baby steps.

The other thing I'd like to say, Premier, is that you did mention that a consultation was recently done by your

parliamentary assistant. What I want to know is why the results of that consultation are not being released so we can all take a look and see what people said and what the recommendations are. We don't need any more studies or ministers meeting. All of the reports and recommendations are here. Let's just move on them.

1420

ORAL QUESTIONS

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition): Mr Premier, you've removed the Minister of Finance from his responsibilities over the markets in Toronto and their regulation. Can we ask you today, will the Chair of Management Board also be assuming the minister's responsibilities for promoting Ontario bonds and paper after the reading of the budget?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I refer that to the Chair of Management Board.

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I go back again to the comments, dare I say, of the Integrity Commissioner, who reviewed this matter and said about the Minister of Finance's approach, "From that point on Minister Phillips, the Chair of Management Board, assumed responsibility for all OSC matters. I remain of the view that the steps you took on February 25, 2004, were sufficient." I repeat, the Integrity Commissioner has looked at this matter and determined that the steps the Minister of Finance took were sufficient. He looked at all the circumstances. If at any time in the future we determine that there are other matters that inadvertently may still be resting elsewhere, I'm sure we would look at that. But I repeat to the public and the Legislature that the Integrity Commissioner looked in detail at this and determined that the steps that the Minister of Finance took were sufficient.

Mr Eves: The Integrity Commissioner ruled that it was quite appropriate that responsibilities for the markets and the regulation be removed from the finance minister. I go back to my original question: Does it not logically follow, then, that with respect to selling Ontario paper to those very same markets, through those very same exchanges, those responsibilities would also be removed from the finance minister and placed in your hands or in the hands of some other minister of the Premier's choosing?

Hon Mr Phillips: Again I say that the Integrity Commissioner—looked at this matter in considerable detail and the letter he wrote is dated March 8, 2004—reviewed all the matters and looked at the circumstances and, I repeat for the public, said, "I remain of the view that the steps you took on February the 25, 2004, were" quite "sufficient." So I think, as I said, the Integrity Commissioner has reviewed the matter. He has determined that the steps the Premier and the Minister of

Finance took were quite sufficient. I believe that to be the case.

Mr Eves: The Integrity Commissioner ruled that it was quite appropriate that the markets be removed from the finance minister's responsibility and that the Ontario Securities Commission, which regulates those markets, also be reviewed. As a matter of fact your very own Premier, on his way into caucus this morning, when asked about the responsibilities for the OSC and the markets being removed, said, "We just think it's appropriate under the circumstances. We are concerned about optics when it comes to these things, so those responsibilities have been removed from him." Do you agree with your Premier?

Hon Mr Phillips: Again I say to the member, and I say to the public, recognize this: This matter was reviewed in detail by the Integrity Commissioner. Justice Coulter Osbourne, knowing all of the circumstances, reviewed it in some considerable detail. The opposition may not want to hear this but I think the public wants to hear this. The conclusion that the Integrity Commissioner drew after examining all the details is, I repeat, "I remain of the view that the steps you took on February 25, 2004, were sufficient." I believe the Integrity Commissioner was right on that matter.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is once again to the Premier and it comes to the Sorbara scandal. This doesn't just speak to your integrity, Premier. It speaks to the ethical standards you set for your government.

Yesterday, the opposition was once again stonewalled in our attempts to get to the bottom of this and have our questions answered. Justice Osbourne said specifically that your Minister of Finance should separate himself from any investigation with respect to the Canada Revenue Agency, but your Minister of Finance also remains the minister of revenue. I want to ask you very sincerely—

Interjection.

Mr Baird: There's a second letter, I say to the Chair of Management Board.

I want to ask you very specifically what measures you, as Premier, have put in place to ensure that your minister, his political staff and his deputy minister and officials are not involved in any way, shape or form with this revenue investigation. Would you answer that, Premier?

Hon Mr McGuinty: This remains from the outset an attack on the finance minister's integrity. I have known the finance minister for 15 years. He is a man of integrity, and I believe the members of the opposition know in their heart of hearts that the Minister of Finance is a man of integrity. The Integrity Commissioner himself has reviewed this particular matter. He says the Minister of Finance has acted appropriately and responsibly in the circumstances, and I believe that ends the matter.

Mr Baird: Premier, it's only a few steps from this chair to that chair, but it seems to be an ethical mile, because you come into this House day after day and refuse to answer the opposition's questions.

You may be interested to know that the Ontario Ministry of Finance and the Canada Revenue Agency speak daily, because they cooperate on audits of Ontario firms. The Ministry of Finance and the Canada Revenue Agency do audits, sometimes jointly and sometimes together. It has been publicly reported that this federal agency is investigating Royal Group Technologies.

I want to ask you a specific question: Have you, as Premier, checked with the Ontario Ministry of Finance, which works for your Minister of Finance, to see if they are cooperating in any way, shape or form with this investigation? Would you answer that question directly, Premier?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The member knows better than that. I am not, and I am not going to, direct anybody within the government to get involved in any way, shape or form with any kind of investigation or potential investigation. We think that's the appropriate and responsible thing to do in the circumstances.

I know the members opposite, for their own particular reasons, have an interest in trying to resuscitate this issue, but I believe it is a dead horse, and flog as they might, this horse will not get to its feet and gallop away.

Mr Baird: You're right, Premier: This issue certainly isn't going to gallop away, because we're going to live up to our responsibilities to Ontario taxpayers to hold you accountable, and to hold you accountable for the ethical standards you place on your ministers.

When you sat in this chair in the official opposition on June 14, 2001, you said, "Ian Urquhart of the Toronto Star put it eloquently in a column. Mr Urquhart wrote, 'There is one downside to a cover-up, no matter how well it is executed: it tells everyone that there is something to hide.'"

Premier, on March 1, you used your government majority on the government agencies committee to shut down reconsideration of the appointment of the vice-chair. On the 24th, you shut down our attempts to investigate the Ontario Securities Commission, and last week you shut down the attempts by the member for Toronto-Danforth to get to the bottom of this scandal. If you have nothing to hide, why are you working so hard to ensure that no light of day is put on any of these ethical issues? What have you got to hide, Premier?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I ask you, Speaker, judging from appearances, who is working harder on this issue in this House: the people on that side or the people on this side?

I was hoping the members opposite might want to ask us, for example, questions relating to OPG and Hydro One. They might want to ask us, for example, about—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm trying to hear the Premier's response.

Hon Mr McGuinty: I thought they might want to ask us about the openness and transparency and, frankly, the honesty we have introduced in our dealings with OPG and Hydro One. I thought they might want to ask us about that or, if not that, then about the number of water inspectors we have hired or the fact that we're investing in public education once again or the fact that we're

committed to helping women and children who find themselves in abusive situations. Those are all important public policy issues that I would think they would have wanted to ask about.

1430

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Premier: Private, for-profit auto insurance companies are picking the pockets of drivers and picking the pockets of innocent accident victims while they're lining their own pockets with huge new profits.

You've got a way out of this mess. You see, in New Brunswick, an all-party committee of Conservatives, New Democrats and, yes, Liberals has just released a landmark report on auto insurance. This committee put the auto insurance industry under the microscope and found there is only one way to ensure fair, low-cost auto insurance for everyone, and that's public auto insurance. Liberals in New Brunswick, along with Conservatives and New Democrats, say in this landmark report that the only way to provide fairness and affordability is public auto insurance.

Premier, you need an escape route from this mess. Will you bring in a non-profit, public auto insurance system here in the province of Ontario?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm with Bob Rae on this one; I have to admit that. We have examined the issue very closely and we have determined that public auto insurance would not serve the interests of the people of Ontario. What we did instead, in keeping with our commitment made during the course of the campaign, was that as soon as we formed the cabinet—within 15 minutes of that, in fact—we immediately froze auto insurance premiums in the province. We've now taken steps to ensure that drivers in the province of Ontario experience, on average, a 10% reduction in their premiums. We are making progress. We're doing so in a realistic, responsible and practical way.

Mr Kormos: Premier, your inability to handle the affordability issue around insurance could well put you with Bob Rae four years from now, at some high-priced law firm downtown.

You see, New Brunswick's all-party committee was very, very clear that private auto insurance is a monster that can't be caged, it's a beast that can't be tamed, it's a mad dog that can't be leashed, and it's time that public auto brought it to heel. The committee says this about public auto insurance and what it's going to mean to drivers in New Brunswick: It will immediately lower the average driver's rates by more than 20%—that's what Liberals are saying in New Brunswick—and it will stop big insurance's discrimination and provide coverage for everyone, regardless of age, gender or where they live in the province.

If you won't commit to public auto insurance, will you at least follow the New Brunswick lead and strike an all-

party committee to look at the viability of public auto insurance for Ontarians?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I know the minister wants to speak to this.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): We've actually done better than that. Within about 15 minutes of our government being sworn in, as you'll recall, the Premier announced that we would be taking steps within 90 days of bringing forward legislation. We did that, sir, in the fall Parliament. We passed a bill. Later on this month, within days, drivers right across Ontario, as their insurance renewals come to them, will see insurance rates that are lower by 10%, and we've only just begun.

The second phase of our program will see sharper markets that are more competitive and more alternatives for individual policyholders to design a policy that will make sure we have the lowest possible insurance rates. I think this outdoes what's being proposed in New Brunswick.

HOSPITAL BOARDS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Premier. Across the province, volunteer hospital board members are angry about Bill 8 because they know that it allows your government to grab power and control and centralize decision-making here at Queen's Park in a way, frankly, that would make even Mike Harris blush.

New Democrats are opposed to Bill 8 because it gives broad, sweeping powers to the Minister of Health to unilaterally impose orders and compliance directives, and there is no opportunity for third party review when issues are in dispute between the ministry and local boards. Bill 8 is about Queen's Park having the final say at the expense of local volunteer boards, who know best about what is needed in their communities.

Accountability is a two-way street; it's not about your government having all of the say all of the time. Premier, why is it that your government is so intent on controlling local hospital volunteer boards?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I disagree fundamentally with the member's characterization of Bill 8. This is a genuine effort on our part to work with our communities, those people who find themselves on our hospital boards and those people who manage our hospitals, to establish a partnership that gives effect to the desire of the people of Ontario to have improved value for their health care dollars and to bring about measurable improvement in the quality of care we deliver to people.

We did something that was absolutely extraordinary with this bill. We put it out for hearings after first reading. We intend to put it out to committee again after second reading so we can continue to listen to the people of Ontario on this. We actually believe that by putting these things out to the public we end up with a better product at the end of the day.

I disagree fundamentally with the characterization. This is an effort on our part to enlist people who work in our hospitals and volunteers so that we can better serve

all Ontarians when it comes to delivering better-quality health care.

Ms Martel: I was at the public hearings and the local hospital boards who came before us were opposed to this bill. They were opposed after first reading and they're going to be opposed after second reading, because this bill is all about you grabbing power and centralizing it here at Queen's Park.

Look, the Conservatives tried to do that with education. In the name of efficiency and accountability, they tried to take away power from local school boards and centralize it here at Queen's Park. It didn't work with education under the Conservatives; it's not going to work for health under you.

I said it before and I'll repeat it: Accountability is a two-way street. You are going in the wrong direction with this bill that gives you all of the power all of the time. I repeat my question: Why is your government so intent on taking control of local volunteer hospital boards?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I'll refer this to the minister.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I always find it interesting when a member of the former government that reached in and reopened collective agreements lectures everybody else about the appropriate way to practise.

In the days since I have become Minister of Health and introduced Bill 8, I've had the opportunity to visit more hospitals across Ontario than I can count at the moment. In meetings in Mississauga with the Trillium hospital, which included board members, we talked about the increasingly productive relationship between the government of Ontario and Ontario's hospitals.

Bill 8 is fundamentally a bill that builds on the work of Roy Romanow, who said in his seminal report that it was critically important we establish the principle of accountability. During the subsequent hearings after second reading, I very much look forward to the opportunity to demonstrate that people across Ontario are strongly in support of Bill 8.

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): My question is for the Minister of the Environment, a minister who seems not content to be only a member of the promise breakers' club, she wants to lead the organization.

Minister, according to the Toronto Star, you are "quite confident" you'll be able to meet a 60% recycling target for the province's waste by 2008.

Interjections.

Mr Barrett: Stay tuned, please.

My question is, what happened to the confidence you exhibited December 5 last year when you told members of this Legislature that your government would meet the 60% target by 2005? Now you say you will not be able to keep your waste reduction commitments by 2005.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Question.

Mr Barrett: Now it's not until 2008, not until the next election and perhaps after the election. Minister, come clear. The only thing you are planning on reducing is confidence people have in your government's ability to keep its word. Is this another broken promise?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): This government is committed to assisting municipalities in dealing with municipal solid waste. We have committed that municipalities in the province will meet 60% diversion targets by the year 2008, and yesterday was the beginning of a process where we will review the Environmental Assessment Act. We will improve the tools that will be made available to municipalities so that they can in fact achieve this goal.

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I would also like to say to the member opposite that there are municipalities already in the province that have achieved 60% diversion. We intend to showcase those municipalities. Just today, I met with the mayor of Toronto, who is very eager to work toward our goal of 60% diversion. So I believe that this government has demonstrated leadership in an area that was totally lacking from the previous government.

Mr Barrett: Minister, you know as well as I that the 60% diversion commitment you have made comes with a cost. It's an exponentially higher cost as we move from 50% diversion to 60%, although I didn't hear any price tag mentioned in yesterday's news conference.

We already know that you expect industry and the private sector to foot half the blue box bill. That represents about 50% of your diversion commitment. Where will the rest come from? The cost of banning organic waste from landfills works out to over \$50 million across the province every year. Where will that money come from? Will it come from your budget? I doubt it, considering the bogus \$8-billion deficit you are touting. Minister, what will be the cost of diversion not only to companies, but to municipalities? Secondly, who will pay?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: What we have heard from municipalities, which are responsible for managing municipal solid waste in the province of Ontario, is that the process that is in place right now, the environmental assessment and approvals process which the previous government tinkered with and, really, as a result of that tinkering, has been the subject of litigation—what municipalities and partners and environmentalists have said to us is we need to improve this process. So our government is going to establish an experts panel. We are going to inspire confidence in an area and an industry that has needed it. It has been totally lacking. There was no leadership by the previous government for the last eight years. This government has set a firm target of 60% diversion by 2008, and we are committed to improving a process to enable municipalities and other partners to reach that goal.

LANDFILL

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, yesterday

you introduced precedent-setting legislation that would prevent the use of lakes larger than one hectare as landfill sites. If this legislation is passed, it will stop projects such as the Adams mine from ever being brought to the table again. What is the Ministry of the Environment doing to ensure that communities all across Ontario will not be faced with the same uncertainty in the future when it comes to the decisions affecting their communities?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): My colleague has asked a very important question, and I know members opposite don't appreciate the significance of this. In fact, there is a community in my riding that, some years ago, had undergone a similar concern. It was a point of great worry that landfill might be sited in a former mine site in the town of Marmora.

What the legislation that we introduced in this House yesterday will achieve when passed is that in the future a landfill will not be able to be sited in a body of water in the province of Ontario. Our government is committed to protecting our water sources, and that is exactly what the legislation yesterday will achieve when passed.

Mr Colle: What is the Ministry of the Environment doing to ensure, as a result of yesterday, that the crown land adjacent to the Adams mine that is up for sale will not be sold, or why is this land for sale in the first place, and will this legislation change the disposition of this crown land?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: That is an item that is dealt with by the Minister of Natural Resources, and he will respond to that, I believe.

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): I have to start off my response by saying I'm very proud to be part of the McGuinty government that's willing to make the tough decisions to protect Ontario's environment.

As many may know, the acquisition of the adjacent crown land to the Adams mine site was a requirement of the environmental assessment that had been approved three or four years ago. If this legislation that was proposed yesterday is passed, the acquisition by the proponent of this crown land would no longer be necessary.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Health. In March 2003, according to the Toronto Star, your Premier made an election promise to increase operating funding to long-term-care facilities by \$430 million annually. Yesterday, we hear, again according to the Toronto Star, you tried to deny that the Liberals had made such a commitment. Later in the day, you reversed yourself and you said that your government will increase funding by \$6,000 per resident. Minister, the people in this province do deserve a straight answer. When are you going to keep your commitment to increase funding by \$6,000 per resident, or is this yet another broken Liberal promise?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I acknowledged to the Toronto Star,

through my press secretary, that I'm used to dealing with the funds in another way and not on a per-person basis and so I was less familiar with the number.

I'm very pleased to say, as I did to the media yesterday, that with respect to our commitment to improving the quality of life for our seniors and vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities, we have been working hard. My parliamentary assistant, the member from North Bay, has been very involved in it. We will have additional resources for our long-term-care facilities. At the point that we're in a position to make the exact announcement, I know the member will be interested to comment at that time.

Mrs Witmer: Not only is the minister unable to commit to a timeline to flow the money, the \$6,000 per resident, but we have also now learned that they have stealthily taken some steps within the Ministry of Health to retroactively claw back the property taxes for 2003 from long-term-care facilities. This is unbelievable. This amounts to \$15 million, and it will translate into a reduction of services for our vulnerable senior citizens. Furthermore, if that's not enough, to add insult to injury, the facilities have not yet received their acuity adjustments as of April 1, since no announcement has been made. We also know that the acuity levels have increased. More funding is desperately needed for our vulnerable seniors, and yet everything this minister and this government is doing is destabilizing the long-term-care sector.

Minister, will that \$6,000 per resident be new funding, or will you simply be giving back to the facilities what you are now taking from them in the retroactive clawback?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I always find it interesting that member of the government that said it was not their plan to close hospitals and subsequently did could stand and lecture me on the state of long-term care in our province so shortly on the heels of her government having responsibility for it.

On the matters at hand with respect to the property tax issue that the member raises, the same amount of money is being provided this year as was provided in their last year for this very important initiative.

Subsequently, what I will say to the honourable member is what I said earlier and what I've said repeatedly to the media: that the challenges that we face and that our seniors face in long-term-care facilities will only be answered by a comprehensive plan, moving forward on a series of fronts. This is exactly the plan that we are working very hard on finalizing and will be delivered to the people of Ontario shortly.

1450

SUBVENTIONS CULTURELLES CULTURAL FUNDING

M. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke-Nord): C'est mon privilège d'adresser ma question à la ministre de la Culture, l'honorable madame Meilleur. Nous savons tous

que les attractions touristiques culturelles de la province ont subi une grave incidence à cause de la flambée du SRAS et de la panne d'électricité de l'été dernier. Les attractions culturelles sont moins fréquentées. Ceci a eu une incidence majeure pour les bénéfices des organismes gouvernementaux et d'autres organismes culturels. Madame la ministre, comment comptez-vous aider ces organismes?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur (ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones): Je suis très consciente des terribles incidences que ces événements ont eues sur les organismes culturels et sur le personnel de ces organismes. Depuis que je suis devenue ministre en octobre dernier, j'ai visité la plupart de ces organismes qui reçoivent du financement de la province. Les employés et les bénévoles de ce secteur font un travail extraordinaire, mais la fréquentation est à la baisse et les revenus ont diminué.

Je suis heureuse d'affirmer aujourd'hui à mon collègue que notre gouvernement a travaillé très étroitement avec les gens de l'industrie. Nous avons augmenté les fonds de marketing touristique, le fonds qui était auparavant de 5 \$ millions. Le gouvernement a accordé 33 subventions. Puis, il y a quelques semaines, nous avons augmenté le budget de 2,5 \$ millions. Ce sont des sommes dont on a besoin pour faire savoir au monde entier que les attractions culturelles de l'Ontario sont ouvertes et qu'elles sont meilleures que jamais.

Mr Qaadri: What has been the response from our partners in the cultural tourism field? How much in money funds has actually been allocated so far?

Hon Mrs Meilleur: We all know that the SARS outbreak was unexpected and had a major impact on this province's health care system and its tourism industry. As I mentioned a moment ago, the people in the industry are fighting back with new shows and productions.

We are helping them with new funding. A few weeks ago I announced that seven cultural organizations in Toronto were receiving a combined amount of \$580,000. Among those, the groups are the Canadian Stage Company, Harbourfront, Massey Hall, Roy Thomson Hall, Casa Loma, the Textile Museum, North by Northeast, and the Toronto Blues Society. There is still a lot of work to be done. I know of other agencies and organizations in and outside of Toronto that will be applying for help to rebound from last year's events. This government will be there for them.

TUITION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Premier. You have frozen tuition fees. If this is true, why is the board of governors from the University of Waterloo voting on a 15% increase on deregulated programs today?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The minister is anxious to speak to this.

Hon Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): We have good news for universities and colleges in Ontario. As I said, I think last week, good news is about to be announced and provided to them. I'm sure the member for Trinity-Spadina will also hear the news when I provide that to the universities and colleges. I hope he will also respect the fact that we are honouring our commitment to freeze tuition fees for two years, and honouring our commitment to compensate the universities and colleges appropriately. We are fully committed to accessible, affordable, high-quality education in a sector that has been strong and will be maintained.

Mr Marchese: This is good news indeed. I've got a problem: The universities don't seem to know it yet. If this is true, why has the board of governors from Wilfrid Laurier University passed a motion calling for a 10% fee hike in 2004 for the business math programs? Clearly they haven't heard the good news. My point to you is: Are tuition fees frozen or not? If they are, would you let the universities know about the good news as quickly as you possibly can?

Hon Mrs Chambers: I truly hope that politics will be set aside and the member for Trinity-Spadina will help me communicate the good news to the universities.

HIGHWAY TOLLS

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I'm pleased that you recently confirmed that the new four-lane Highway 69 from Parry Sound to Sudbury will be a freeway, not a toll highway. Can you confirm for the House and all the residents and businesses in northern Ontario that Highway 11 will be a freeway and not a toll highway?

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I know that the Minister of Transportation wants to address this.

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): We have addressed this issue several times here. I want to assure you that we are developing criteria for the toll highways and we will take one highway at a time and then compare against the criteria and see whether tolls need to be imposed or not.

Mr Miller: That really was not the answer I was looking for. Frankly, I was hoping that the Minister of Northern Development and Mines would be answering and standing up for the north. Based on his reaction, I'm sure that's probably not what the Minister of Northern Development and Mines was looking for either.

Highway 11 should be considered basic infrastructure for the north. It is an important part of the foundation necessary for economic growth in the north. Our government recognized the importance of highways in the north and invested a record \$1.6 billion on northern roads. As I brought up before, your party made the promise in the election that no road without an alternate

route would be tolled. What is the alternate route for Highway 11 from Muskoka to North Bay?

Hon Mr Takhar: We already said last week that we will not toll any highways where there's no alternative route. We will consider tolls only for new highways, and we are in the middle of developing criteria.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. My local children's aid society is experiencing an increase in the number of children in its care, while dealing with a number of financial pressures that make it very difficult for them to do their job, which is to protect children from abuse and neglect. My CAS tells me that the current funding framework has created a number of problems, including spiralling budget needs which have led to in-year operating deficits. I'd like to ask the minister, how can we expect CAS workers to properly do their job with these constant funding pressures, while at the same time recognizing that we cannot continue to bail them out every spring?

1500

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Our government, and I'm sure everyone in this Legislature, appreciates the important and very difficult work our children's aid societies do across the province. The CASs agree that the funding formulas are flawed. The funding formula is based on how many kids can be taken away. There isn't any funding in the formula for counselling and adoption etc. Even though we're spending over a billion dollars a year, the CASs still run deficits. Since January of this year the McGuinty government has provided an additional \$88.4 million to relieve them of these pressures, and we will now move forward with the CASs to improve the funding formula.

Interjections.

Mr Milloy: Unfortunately, the opposition does not care about children's aid societies. I care about them. And even though I applaud the good work that children's aid societies are doing under very difficult circumstances, I think more can be done in terms of permanent and preventive measures. In fact, the CAS in my community tells me they find the current funding framework constricting and not well suited to working toward permanent solutions to our children.

Will the minister commit today to untying the hands of our CAS workers so they can do what is in the best interest of our children?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: We will be working with the children's aid societies to do just that. We have identified many flaws, both in the funding formula and in the services, and we have appointed Mr Bruce Rivers, who is the executive director of the Toronto Children's Aid Society, to lead us in that. We have also asked them, for these new monies to relieve their pressures, to agree to certain changes in the way they work. And they have

agreed to increase the number of adoptions. We will be working toward looking at legislative changes as well to make adoptions more possible. Because even though it's fiscally the right thing to do, it's also the right thing to do for the children: give them a good family to raise them. There is also an amazing, significant number of children from our child welfare system who end up in our youth justice system. Giving them families at an early age and making it easier for children's aid societies to be able to have them adopted will also alleviate the pressures for that sector and do the right thing for the families of this province.

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Today's press reports indicate that convicted pedophile Douglas Moore, now considered a prime suspect in the death of 15-year-old René Charlebois—and it was a terrible death, of course—had been living in Peel region for some time, unknown to local residents. That's our understanding. Moore is also suspected in the possible deaths of two other young men who have been missing since last December.

Our government passed legislation allowing police chiefs to publicize the name, location and photos of pedophiles if and when they were moved into communities in the province. Minister, did the Peel regional police use this legislation to warn residents of Mr Moore's presence, and if not, do you know why not?

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I thank the member for the question. The answer is quite simple: Mr Moore was not registered under the Ontario sex registry act, and as a result they had no way of knowing whether he was a pedophile.

Mr Dunlop: According to the media speculation, it appears that Mr Moore may have been a serial killer and a sexual predator who preyed on young men. I believe we should be concerned that provincial legislation wasn't used, and of course you give us a reason now, to alert Peel residents of the man's presence and of the dangers he posed to the community. Minister, will you consider amending the legislation to require police services across Ontario to make this information public? I can assure you that if you do that, you'll have the support of our caucus for very speedy passage of that.

Hon Mr Kwinter: The member should know the federal government has now passed its own legislation. At one time, Ontario was the only province in Canada that had sex offender registration. We're hopeful that we can roll it all in so we have a single system, so that someone doesn't fall between the cracks where we have provinces with one and the federal government with another. Certainly it is our intention to make sure we grandfather all known sex offenders, that they are all incorporated into the act. That is our intent.

TAXI LICENSING

Mr Vic Dhillon (Brampton West-Mississauga): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. A number of people in and around my riding make their living working as legitimate and licensed taxi and limo drivers at Pearson International Airport. However, unlicensed drivers scoop their fares illegally. Many of these illegal drivers are not properly trained, many of their vehicles are unfit, and many do not carry proper commercial insurance coverage.

I have heard of examples of Canadians and, most importantly, tourists, having been charged higher fares than are legally allowed by the Greater Toronto Airports Authority. Minister, what are you doing to combat this problem, to protect our consumers and tourists from this kind of gouging and, most importantly, to protect the livelihoods of these hard-working people?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I would like to thank my colleague from Brampton West-Mississauga. I am very much aware of this issue. The Premier is very much aware of this issue, and he has also met with industry representatives. We are working with other levels of government, like the federal government and the municipalities, to find a solution to this very long-term problem that has existed in this industry for a very long period. We are committed to taking action that will ensure that the taxi drivers who don't have the licences will not be able to operate on our roads.

Mr Dhillon: However, the drivers in my riding have been waiting for a long time for action on this issue. Their livelihoods have been hurt, and this lack of enforcement has put citizens' personal safety and their pocketbooks needlessly at risk. Can the minister provide these legitimate drivers in my riding with some timelines for action on this issue?

Hon Mr Takhar: As I said, we are meeting with our stakeholders and other levels of government to find a solution to this problem that has existed in this industry for a very long time. I also want to thank my colleague because he participated in some of those meetings with me.

Let me tell you what we have done so far. On February 6, we met with the representatives from Transport Canada and the Minister of Transport. On February 16, we met with the licensed taxi and limo drivers to discuss their concerns. On February 20, we met with the GTAA. We continue to meet with the other stakeholders so that we can find some solutions to address the issues that are of concern to this industry and have not been addressed for a very, very long time.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. Michigan is rejecting Toronto's garbage, and will be more, and more because we don't have a deposit return system like

they do. Sometimes we can be very quick to criticize Americans, but they're way ahead of us on this issue, and in fact they have done the right thing. Minister, it is really clear that in Michigan you aren't allowed to send pop bottles to landfill. Are you going to implement a deposit return system here in Ontario for pop and LCBO bottles?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): Certainly we are very aware of the developments in Michigan and some of their recent changes to the legislation. Just this morning, I had an opportunity to meet with the mayor of Toronto, a city that is particularly interested in those initiatives. The mayor of Toronto would indicate to me that, first of all, they're confident that, because of the blue box program and its efficiency in the city of Toronto, their city will be able to meet the new standards of the state of Michigan. He has also shared his support for our initiative to divert 60% of waste from landfill. I'm very happy that we have municipal partners who are prepared to work with us to improve the blue box program, which has proved to be so successful across this province.

Ms Churley: Minister, that wasn't the question. I must congratulate the city of Toronto because they're in fact ahead of their targets on diversion. But I'm talking to councillors there, and they're making it very clear that you need to move quickly on deposit return systems. You'll also need to bring bills on electronic waste and that sort of thing.

It is very clear that if you want to keep Michigan open for now, you have to bring in a deposit return system, just like eight other provinces have done across this country. And please don't tell me you're leaving it up to the WDO. It is your responsibility. We know they were put in under the Tories and they don't support deposit return. Minister, I'm going to ask you again, will you stand up to industry, stand up for the environment, and bring in a deposit return system now?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: I would like to remind the member opposite that when they were government, they didn't bring in a deposit return system. That was not an initiative that they supported. We are going to be issuing a discussion paper in the month of May. We want to gain input from all participants—municipal, environmental sector, the industry. We want to hear what they have to tell us on how to make our diversion targets reachable. That's the initiative and that's the leadership that this government is moving on. We are focusing on diversion and we are counting on the people of Ontario to provide us with ideas on how we can reach diversion right across Ontario.

1510

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Minister, in six short months you've taken the leading economy in North America and, piece by piece, torn down the very foundation that created over

one million new jobs for hard-working Ontarians. Small businesses across the province are reeling from your government's attack on the Ontario economy.

Let's look at the record so far. On January 1, the largest tax hike in history resulted in a 37% increase in small business taxes. In March of this year, you gave municipalities the authority to jack up business property taxes. On April 1, your government slapped small business with a 30% electricity rate increase.

In your government's election platform, you committed to providing an economic climate that would help small business grow. All I see from this government is another broken promise that will chase thousands of jobs out of Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

Mr Yakabuski: —and choke the life out of small business. Minister, what are you going to do today to assure small businesses that you have a plan that will protect jobs, strengthen the economy and allow small business—

The Speaker: Minister?

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): Let me tell you, we're going to do a lot more than your government did. First of all, the Minister of Finance has increased the limit in terms of exemption for small business tax from \$320,000 to \$400,000. That's a big benefit to small business. I would add that the small business tax rate in Ontario is significantly lower than that of our trading partners to the south. Ontario's small business tax rate is 22.12%, compared to the Great Lakes average of 40%, so we are significantly lower than our competitors to the south.

Mr Yakabuski: The minister is very good with fudging numbers. The vast majority of small businesses fell below the old ceiling, so the raising of that ceiling doesn't affect them.

Minister, instead of jet-setting across the world on junkets to Switzerland, Germany and Japan, you should be spending more time ensuring that the future of our small businesses is being protected. In your election platform, you committed to freezing taxes on small businesses. Instead, you hit them with punishing income and property tax increases. You promised to reduce the bureaucratic workload for these employers and provide them with electronic access to laws, rules and regulations that apply to their businesses.

Minister, tell Ontario's small businesses that you are making your voice heard at the cabinet table. Tell them that you are going to give them an economic climate where they can continue to thrive—

The Speaker: Question.

Mr Yakabuski: —and create jobs for Ontarians. Tell them that from this point forward—

The Speaker: Please put your question.

Mr Yakabuski: Will you tell Ontario small business owners that you will stop breaking your promises and provide them with the support they need and expect from this government?

Hon Mr Cordiano: I think small business owners of this province appreciate that we are bringing some discipline to governing in this province, unlike the previous government. Let me tell you what we're doing for small business.

My parliamentary assistant, Tony Wong, has conducted extensive consultations with the small business community to fix up the mess you left behind when you were engaged in that red tape secretariat that did nothing for small business. We're going to bring forward some real assistance. We're going to have a Web portal where small businesses can access, one-stop shopping, all of the programs we offer for small business.

In addition, I would say to the member, the fact that I've been in Japan and Europe only speaks to the lack of presence we had around the world when your government was in power.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Mr Cordiano: You completely forgot about how important it is to have presence in international markets. We're going to make sure that Ontario is truly represented around the world. Our voices are going to be heard, and we're going to bring home more deals.

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

HIGHWAY TOLLS

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, you were asked a moment ago by a member of the opposition a question about Highway 11. I'd like to make it perfectly clear for the residents of Nipissing, the member from Nickel Belt and the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, as well as the members of this House: Will there be tolls on Highway 11?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): There seem to be a lot of answers on this side. Let me get the answer. Minister of Transportation.

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I think the opposition is more eager to give answers than me.

What I indicated before is, if there is no alternative route, there will be no tolls. I understand Highway 11 has no alternative route, so there will be no tolls. It also doesn't make any sense to impose tolls on Highway 11 from an economic point of view either.

CONTAMINATED SOIL

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, yesterday you made a statement in the House where you discussed cleaning up the environment with the federal government. The previous government was able to identify a very serious matter in northern Ontario whereby moving up the food chain is PC contamination on midway-range radar sites. These contaminants have been identified within lower-level mammals at this current time. We are

wondering, where do you stand in negotiations with the feds on the cleanup of site 17?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I'm very happy to explain and perhaps clarify for the member opposite the initiative that this government will be mounting with the federal government with respect to the environmental assessment and approvals process.

In the country right now, the federal government has a process for environmental assessment and the provincial government has a process. Those projects that would receive funds from the federal government or would be on federal lands are subject to a federal environmental assessment. Typically, what happens is that one environmental assessment must be completed before another one can happen. Our government, after discussing this issue with the federal Minister of the Environment, recognizes that this can add some length of time to any project and undue delay. Our goal is to work with the federal government on that issue.

Mr Ouellette: What's taken place in the past is that the previous government was in negotiations. These midway-range radar sites were transferred from the federal government to the provincial government, not knowing they were contaminated. Since then, the previous government was able to identify the fact that there is a substantial amount of contamination in the areas. Now the particular site between Cochrane and Moosonee has been identified as being very serious and we are moving forward on that cleanup of the contaminated site. We are wondering, are you still in negotiation with the federal government and what is your intention of cleaning up that particular site?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: This government is committed to a clean, safe, healthy environment for the people of Ontario. I'm very aware of other sites that the federal government has an interest in. There is one in my riding and there are a number across Ontario. I can assure the member opposite that this government will do all we can to work with any jurisdiction to ensure that the safety of the people in those communities is put first.

1520

HAMILTON AIRPORT

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I have a question for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. I know how hard you've been working, Mr Minister, to bring improvement to the John C. Munro Hamilton International Airport. I know we both consider the development of the airport to be a top economic priority for the region.

Mr Minister, on April 2 you met in Hamilton with officials from the Hamilton international airport. They presented a report outlining items to be considered by our government, in conjunction with the municipal and federal governments, to help improve the airport and its services. What was the outcome of this meeting, and

what are we doing to make further improvements at John C. Munro Hamilton International Airport?

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): Let me thank the member for that very important question. I just want to say at the outset that the idea for this meeting came from our colleague the late Dominic Agostino, and I want to thank him posthumously for that suggestion, because I think this is a great initiative to commence to assist the city of Hamilton and its international airport.

It is a very important gateway for the Golden Horseshoe. We want to make certain that the Hamilton airport is a cargo and tourist hub. To that end, we took the first steps at the meeting by talking to the officials. Also present were: the mayor of Hamilton, Mr Di Ianni; some federal ministers, Mr Valeri and Mr Keyes; my good friend and colleague Minister Bountrogianni; Jennifer Mossop, the member from Stoney Creek; and Judy Marsales, who is asking this question.

I just want to say it was important because we announced, on behalf of the Minister of Transportation, new signage to the airport along the Queen Elizabeth Way, Highways 403 and 407 and the new Highway 6. This is new signage which will help direct people to the airport, and that's an important initiative.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I have a petition from 150 people from Almonte, Pakenham, Clayton, Middleville and a number of other areas in Lanark county. This is to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty stated clearly in his election platform that he is committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors and has more recently said he is considering breaking this pledge by reducing coverage for seniors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government fulfil its promise and start standing up for seniors by protecting the Ontario drug benefit program and the vital assistance it provides to those who require prescription medications."

I have endorsed this petition.

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL PARKWAY

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I appreciate this opportunity. This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Alexander Graham Bell, renowned inventor of society-altering technological inventions, such as the telephone, greatly revolutionized the daily lives of people in Ontario, Canada and indeed the world; and

"Whereas Alexander Graham Bell's contributions to science, technology and society as a whole, were in part developed and tested while he lived in Brantford, Ontario; and

"Whereas Brantford lies at the heart of the section of 403 which runs from Woodstock to Burlington;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To adopt and pass into law Dave Levac's private member's bill, Bill 44, the Alexander Graham Bell Parkway Act, renaming Highway 403 between Woodstock and Burlington as a tribute to this great inventor" and Canadian.

I sign my name to this petition and pass it to Lauren.

HIGHWAY 518

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition from the residents and constituents of Parry Sound-Muskoka, and it says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Highway 518 between Highway 69 and Highway 11 serves the residents of the communities of Haines Lake, Orrville, Bear Lake, Whitehall and Sprucedale; and

"Whereas Highway 518 is in a deplorable condition; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has previously assured local residents of its intention to upgrade and improve Highway 518;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We request that the Ministry of Transportation immediately proceed with the reconstruction of Highway 518 between Highway 69 and Highway 11."

I support this petition and sign my name to it.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a large number of petitions to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the current forest management practices in Ontario do not take into account labour opportunities for residents of Ontario;

"Whereas an important economic tax base is being lost;

"Whereas the government of Ontario does not take into consideration the residents of Ontario or their future by allowing Ontario's timber to be processed out of province;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take immediate action to ban any harvesting of any species of tree for the purpose of transporting or processing outside of the province of Ontario."

This petition is signed by many people, including people from Tunis, Ontario.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented by Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of Site 41 and the nearby water sources."

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I've signed my name to my petition and I agree with it. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the previous government sat on their hands and watched auto insurance rates shoot through the roof;

"Whereas this lack of restraint has led to profits for insurance companies amounting to over \$2.6 billion; and

"Whereas motorists across the province expect rates to be fair;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support government legislation to reduce auto insurance rates and ensure that cost savings in the system lead to premium reduction."

I hand the petition over to Sarah.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I have found yet more petitions from the good people of Black Creek Leisure Homes in Stevensville, Ontario. On this one, June and Norman Rattew and John and Adele Richards have signed this one that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas during the election campaign, the Dalton McGuinty Liberals said they would improve the Ontario drug benefit program but now are considering delisting drugs and imposing higher user fees; and

"Whereas the Liberal government has increased costs to seniors by taking away the seniors' property tax rebate and increased the price of hydro;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should keep their campaign promise to improve the Ontario drug benefit program and abandon their plan to delist drugs or increase seniors' drug fees."

I sign my signature in support.

TUITION

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I keep getting petitions from the Canadian Federation of Students. This particular one is from the Fédération Canadienne des Étudiantes et Étudiants, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas average tuition fees in Ontario are the second-highest in Canada; and

"Whereas average undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have more than doubled in the past 10 years; and

"Whereas tuition fees for deregulated programs have, in certain cases, doubled and even tripled; and

"Whereas Statistics Canada has documented a link between increasing tuition fees and diminishing access to post-secondary education; and

"Whereas four other provincial governments have taken a leadership role by freezing and reducing tuition fees;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) Freeze tuition fees for all programs at their current levels; and

"(2) Take steps to reduce the tuition fees of all graduate programs, post-diploma programs and professional programs for which tuition fees have been deregulated since 1998."

Since I agree with this petition, I'm delighted to sign it as well.

1530

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition from constituents in the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. It says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the community of Yearley, Ontario, within the electoral district of Parry Sound-Muskoka experiences frequent and prolonged power outages;

"Whereas the power outages have become a health and safety issue to the residents of the community and the students who visit the outdoor education centre;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Energy instruct Hydro One to conduct an investigation of the distribution and feeder lines that serve Yearley, and take the necessary steps to ensure reliable energy through ongoing forestry maintenance and required line improvements."

I support this petition and sign my name to it.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas, as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I'm pleased to sign my name to this.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have a petition that's entitled "Stop MPAC from Sapping Sugar Shacks." These are from Marvin Chambers's operation. The wording is considerably different from similar petitions I read yesterday, as I read:

"Whereas the Municipal Property Assessment Corp (MPAC) has chosen to assess sugar shacks as industrial properties, increasing assessment rates dramatically and forcing the closure of some operations; and

"Whereas the agriculture protection act clearly defines maple syrup as an agricultural product; and

"Whereas sugar shacks are used for the production of maple syrup for only a small portion of the year; and

"Whereas sugar shacks and maple syrup are an important part of the agri-tourism business in rural Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to hold assessment value at last year's levels until a fairer method of assessment can be developed and implemented, or a reclassification of sugar shack properties can be made."

I also join my signature to the 300 on these ones.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present another petition on behalf of seniors in the riding of Erie-Lincoln, these from Black Creek and Stevensville. Patricia and Jerry Rol and Doris McRoberts headline this particular petition, which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas during the election campaign, the Dalton McGuinty Liberals said they would improve the Ontario drug benefit program but now are considering delisting drugs and imposing higher user fees; and

"Whereas the Liberal government has increased costs to seniors by taking away the seniors' property tax rebate and increased the price of hydro;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty Liberals should keep their campaign promise to improve the Ontario drug benefit program and abandon their plan to delist drugs or increase seniors' drug fees."

In support, I affix my signature.

LIABILITY INSURANCE

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition from my constituents in Parry Sound-Muskoka.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas liability insurance is a necessary coverage;

"Whereas the rising cost of liability insurance is of great concern;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To review liability insurance rates and take steps to ensure reasonable rates, now and in the future."

I support this petition and I sign my name to it.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I would like to congratulate the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka on his Tartan Day suit today.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the Minister of the Environment on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREENBELT PROTECTION ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION DE LA CEINTURE DE VERDURE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 30, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 27, An Act to establish a greenbelt study area and to amend the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001 / Projet de loi 27, Loi établissant une zone d'étude de la ceinture de

verdure et modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur la conservation de la moraine d'Oak Ridges.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I understand that the member for Toronto-Danforth has the floor.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I was launched into full flight and I was stopped at 6 of the clock last week when I was talking about this bill. I want to continue because it is a really important bill before us today.

I have already indicated that I support the bill and will be voting for it. I'm looking forward to its passing so it can go out for public hearings and we can get moving on it. Because overall, with some problems that I pointed out—and I'm hoping the government will be interested in amending it to fix these problems—I am supportive. Of course, the proof is always in the pudding with these kinds of bills, but it's a very important step forward.

I talked briefly before and I'm going to talk again, just to remind the government, about the areas of concern. It is not just me saying this, it's CONE, the Coalition on the Niagara Escarpment, Environmental Defence Canada and others who are very concerned about a number of components of this bill, although generally as well are overall supportive.

We're worried about the highways that are still planned to criss-cross right through the greenbelt area that's being proposed. We all know that when you build a highway, the development comes with that, so we're concerned that a lot of this green space will actually end up turning into brown space. The government's seeming continued commitment to those highways is a major problem.

I'm not going get into toll roads at the moment. I'll leave that to my colleague from Beaches-East York later. I want to talk about the environmental aspects of this.

The other thing that we are very concerned about, and something has got to be done to prevent, is what we refer to as leapfrog development. That is, you've got your defined green space, you've got the area all mapped out and you know where it is, but within that green space—and I'm sure that you really are interested in knowing this, Mr Speaker, because I know if you could vote on this and speak to this, you'd support my position—what it means is that there will be patches, big swaths of land in the middle of this green space, that are left out. The Simcoe area and other areas as well are not included in this plan. That's why we call it leapfrog: There will be one here and another over here. That means it's kind of like highways: It could result in sprawl that is even further away from existing jobs, shopping and communities. Building within the existing urban envelope, the one we now have, is the key to environmentally friendly development. This goes a long way to getting us there, but with these particular problems, it's not going to work. We're hoping that with deputations from environmental and conservation organizations, and from us, some amendments can be made to fix these problems. There are a few others, but these are the two main areas where we need to see amendments.

1540

What I want to dwell on and speak in particular about is the proposed Castle Glen development in the town of The Blue Mountains. I raised a question in the House, I made a statement and I'm still urging the minister to deal with this problem.

Speaker, in case you, and people who may be listening, are not aware of this, the proposed Castle Glen development—actually, it's a disgrace. For the first time since the province began regulating land use on the escarpment in June 1975—for the very first time—we have a proposal, which has actually moved quite far, to build a year-round town, not just a little seasonal development which, here and there, have been approved by various Niagara commissioners. What happened—and the previous Tories started this; I'll give you that—is their appointees, three days before their appointments were up, voted to let this go ahead, and there was a settlement with the town.

What I called on the minister to do, and what CONE called on the minister to do—on March 9, 2004, they wrote to request that the zoning order within this bill we're talking about today be amended to include the Niagara Escarpment plan area to keep this from happening. We need to do that, because this has gone before the OMB. We're trying to prevent that from happening for a number of reasons.

I asked the government, and they said they weren't going to interfere with the OMB process. As you'll recall, Speaker, when you were sitting over here in opposition and your then colleague Mike Colle in particular asked a lot of questions about the Oak Ridges moraine and OMB hearings, that was the answer the Tories gave the Liberals. Now they're giving the same answer to us, and they know better. This is a problem, and something can be done to stop it.

What I'm hearing from people from the area who are fighting this proposal—and the OMB hearings have started—is that not only is it going forward but there is a concern that because an overall agreement was reached between the town and the developers, and the new Niagara Escarpment Commission members perhaps might not have voted for this—I hear there are actually some very good, green people on that commission now—but are reluctant to overturn a decision by a previous board. So it's going before the OMB.

The other big problem, though—and this may not mean a whole lot to people who aren't involved a lot in these planning issues—is that they've divided this particular hearing into two parts. Over 29 years or so, the way that development proposals for the area have been dealt with is not piecemeal but in one part, so the plan is seen as a whole and you have a sense of what the environmental impact and the other impacts will be. I believe, and many others believe, that what's happening here—I believe the OMB is in discussions about that now—runs completely contrary to the purposes and objectives of the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act, because they are looking at it in a

piecemeal fashion. I'm not sure why that has been done, except that the proponent, the developer, knows that this is coming and there's going to be a lot of pressure on the government to keep this from happening. In other words, what the developer is doing is trying to proceed without the benefit of the comprehensive planning context.

This does not constitute good planning for any area—for a city, for any urban or rural area. You need to be able to see the complete plan. You allow a bit of it to go through, and then the next stage comes up—well, that's already there, so in order to support this infrastructure, we're going to have to build the school or the whatever else to support what we've already built here. That's what happens when you do it in piecemeal fashion.

I believe very strongly that if the Liberal government doesn't step in and do something about this and stop it, include it in the zoning order right away or place a ministerial zoning order on it—whatever. It's in the power of the government. As they know from the fight with the Tories, when they were in office, over Oak Ridges, they can do it if they were really committed to doing it.

It's really, really important, if the government wants to move forward in a positive way with this particular bill, that this be done, because it will become, mark my words, the Liberal government's Oak Ridges moraine nightmare. The same thing will happen. It hasn't caught fire yet, but I urge all members to take a look into this, because conservationists and many of the people who live in the area are outraged that this is going ahead and are saying to me—and I'm sure members of the government are also getting this information—that should the government allow this to go ahead, it will betray the very principles that are imbedded in this bill before us.

It is critical not just in terms of protecting the Niagara Escarpment and protecting the environment and all of those things, but I would say that it's critical for the government for political reasons, because as it grows out there and more and more people know about it, the government's going to hear more and more about it. There's going to be very little discussion about the good things in this bill, which are many. I can't use the word that I want to use—it begins with an "h", but I'm not allowed to use it—but that's the way people will see it.

That's a shame, when the government is bringing forward, generally, with the exceptions that I made earlier—which are very important points, but I believe there is some hope that we can get those amended to fix those problems; if not, then the bill will be incomplete. But to allow something like this to go on at the same time, to ruin politically their chances to move forward on their commitment to green space and the environment—as I pointed out earlier, if there was a silver lining at all in the Liberal government finding out after being elected that stopping those 6,000 homes from being built on the Oak Ridges moraine, as promised in the election campaign, was turning out to be a lot easier said than done, as a lot of the promises that the Liberals made—and this is one that the government found, under the circumstances,

they had to break. You got such a lot of grief over that, didn't you? I believe that the silver lining is, there was a decision to try to make up for that, and I believe that's a good thing.

Here we are debating this bill, and generally, I support its direction. I'm more or less obsessed—in fact, I'm pretty obsessed right now; I'm talking to people every day who are trying to stop this, so I'm not going to let up. I realize that in question period meetings I might not be able to get on a question about this every day; there are other important issues of the day every day. But it's something that I will find ways to raise time and time again, and so will some of the environmental groups and conservation groups who are supporting you.

1550 What we're talking about here is an international treasure. We are talking about a UNESCO world heritage site. As I said, just so you understand how important this is, for the first time it is happening under—and I know the Minister of the Environment—and I know this is not her area; it's the Minister of Natural Resources' area—would be interested in hearing about what's happening here and perhaps trying to intervene and stop the Minister of Municipal Affairs from going ahead with this, because it is allowing, under a Liberal government that proclaims to be green, the province, for the first time in all of those years, to build a year-round, whole town on a very environmentally sensitive area of the Niagara Escarpment.

In fact, I was surprised to see, given that the government didn't include it in the act before us today, that the minister—I'm going to see if I can find it here in all of these papers—the Minister of Natural Resources, I believe, actually has something called a big picture, mapping the province's most threatened environmentally significant areas. Guess what's on that map from your own government's Ministry of Natural Resources? Guess. Say it with me: Castle Glen properties. It's right there, in the middle of that map of one of the most environmentally sensitive areas.

I know that there are, perhaps, difficulties in stepping in. The minister just did it with the Adams mine, and I did congratulate her on that. I think I'm one of those opposition members who doesn't have trouble saying to government members, when I support the work that they're doing, sometimes fully, sometimes partially—on Adams mine, I think you did the right thing, despite the fact that you were getting a lot of criticism from the Tories and from the mayor and others in the area, the proponents, and from some of the media. It's tough to do these things sometimes, but it was the right thing to do. Perhaps, partly, you did it to save David Ramsay's seat. I was there when he said he'd resign if it didn't get stopped. Whatever the reasons, it was the right thing to do. To put an end to that, even though the government's going to have a hassle for some time dealing with the ramifications, legal and otherwise, was the right thing to do, and now we can move forward. Of course, I will be critical and ask questions about where we go from here in terms of how we deal with our garbage and our

resources, but I did say and will say again that I was very pleased to see the government make that move.

I'm saying again that I'm very pleased to see the government move forward with the Greenbelt Protection Act. I'm not allowed to say the minister's not here, but I'm sure he's watching on TV. I did raise it before and I'm hoping that he will get in touch with the area people who are opposed and the conservation groups, the environmental groups, and find a solution to this problem and get it stopped now, because I'm going to make sure that it is raised time and time again until it is stopped.

What they've applied to do is to build 1,600 new residential units plus 300 commercial accommodation units and three golf courses on 620 hectares in the municipality of the town of The Blue Mountains. I actually do think it's scandalous. I do. I can't believe that this is going on while the government is introducing this bill. The Liberal government did promise to stop sprawl and protect the environment. If you allow this to go ahead, it is going to make that promise seem awfully hollow and it's going keep on haunting you like the Oak Ridges moraine did to the previous Tory government.

I'm going to come back to the bill in my few minutes left here. I wanted to talk a bit about the Ontario Realty Corp. The Ontario Realty Corp right now owns real estate—sorry, I'm just trying to get my thoughts straight here. Ah, yes, the Liberals' commitment to the new toll roads will cost consumers, but it's also going to cost the environment. I said earlier that I wasn't going to go into the whole issue about the minister's responses. I believe we have a whole new area today where we might see toll roads. It'll cost consumers, but it will also cost the environment. The Liberal intention is to speed up the building of the expressways, it sounds like, by tolling them. Some days we hear they're going to toll them and some days we hear they're not going to do it.

I wanted to focus for a minute on the extension of Highway 404 north toward Lake Simcoe, which is going to be particularly and especially problematic as it will, as I talked about earlier, facilitate this leapfrog development, such as the massive Queensville development, which is planned to ultimately house, I believe, around 30,000 people. Just imagine that. You build this right in the middle of this so-called greenbelt and this will push development even further from existing jobs in other communities, thereby adding to their commuting times. You can't be using this new greenbelt legislation, this greenbelt area as an excuse to move development further and further out.

What we need, and what we say over and over again, is new thinking about the way we develop. We need to develop in a more compact urban form. We have to stop this madness. If you create a greenbelt and you push the extension of Highway 404 even further, then the development starts leapfrogging outside that greenbelt. The next thing you know, you've got more urban sprawl growing and causing all the same problems and you've got all these commuters trying to drive to their jobs or whatever. That's not only an environmental problem, as

we know very well, any members who don't live right in downtown Toronto—fortunately, I can ride my bike to work, if the weather would get warmer again soon. I'm lucky in that way, but I hope most people here take public transportation. I really hope they do. But if you're forced to drive from time to time, as you might be, you know what it's like sitting in that traffic for hours. It's bad for the economy. It's not only bad for the environment; the more we develop further and further outside the boundaries of the city, outside the greenbelt, the further people are going to have to get in those cars and drive. When you build in these outskirts way, way out, there's not a lot of infrastructure money for public transportation and all of the other things that have to be built up. There are real problems around extending these highways and allowing this leapfrog development to happen.

I hope very much that, as we debate this bill—as I said, we want to see it passed. We want to see it go out for the final consultations. Hopefully, the government will accept the amendments. We want to get moving on this. It's really critical. I understand that. In the meantime, though, I would again urge the government, if it wants to be able to stand up and speak very positively and be proud of this bill before us, they're going to have to make those amendments and they are going to have to stop this development on the Niagara Escarpment.

It is absolutely critical that those of you who are as concerned about this as I am, perhaps some of you even more so now that you know about it, will go to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, will go to the Premier, and say to them exactly what I'm saying to you today, that if we don't stop this development, it will be a very black mark against your own government. It will haunt you from day to day right throughout the passing of this greenbelt bill and you will never get the credit you deserve over this because that will fly in the face of your intention to protect the environment and green space in this province.

1600

The Acting Speaker (Mr Brad Duguid): Questions and comments?

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): The proposed Greenbelt Protection Act is asking the Legislature for a time out. The time is needed to develop a strategy so that we can coexist in terms of the urban and rural structures that we now have. Current land use planning seems to be more focused on urban development at this time and not on the preservation of farmland and environmentally sensitive lands. While growth shoots up in many directions at the same time, for no logical reason, no control, often against the wishes of municipal councils, and with no vision for the future, we have a problem. We need to look closely at the development of policies that define and regulate what is intrusive growth and what is normal community growth. Carefully thought-out urban-rural planning means that we can have adequate development and preserve agricultural land at the same time.

As a former municipal councillor, I can remember the practice by developers of buying up farmland, acre after acre, for no other reason than speculation. You might say they leapfrogged, as the member for Toronto-Danforth likes to say; but in this case, they leapfrogged out over residentially zoned areas and into agriculturally zoned areas. They did this with the intent of going before council later and applying for a rezoning, and they left the former owners of that farmland as tenant farmers on what are class 1 and class 2 lands. I think what happened then is that there was a conflict between the people who live in those houses and what are normal farm practices.

So this legislation asks us to take a step back, and it gives us the time to do that so that we can develop a win-win—

The Acting Speaker: More questions and comments?

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to respond to the comments of the member for Toronto-Danforth and a bit to the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and her response to the member for Toronto-Danforth's comments.

I think the member for Toronto-Danforth was absolutely right when she talked at the beginning of her remarks about the circumstances from which this legislation was born. Because you remember, in the early days of the Dalton McGuinty government, the Premier had drawn a very strong line in the sand that there would be no homes built on the Oak Ridges moraine, and in fact he reiterated that pledge for weeks after the election campaign. Only, once he came into office, he backslid, flip-flopped, erased that line in the sand and retreated. In fact, there are now almost 6,000 homes being built on the Oak Ridges moraine, contrary to what was campaigned upon by Premier McGuinty and his members in that area. So I think in response to that, as part of their backsliding and trying to do what they call "issues management," they threw out the greenbelt legislation.

Granted, greenbelt legislation, as we have said on this side of the floor, sounds great in principle to protect our green space. How can you argue with any notion to preserve green space, which is a value that I think every member of this House would share? The point we're making, though, is that there is a lot of devil in the details.

The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex spoke just before this, and I know with her experience in agriculture and being a former member of the OFA board, it won't be lost on her or other members of this Legislature the significant jeopardy that this puts farmers in the greenbelt protection area under. For example, if a sour cherry farmer in Beamsville finds that the price for his or her product has plummeted because of subsidies from Washington state or overseas, what recourse do they have? What is the agricultural framework or support to allow them to continue farming?

I plan on speaking more to that point about agriculture, and I hope to see the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and others do likewise.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Thank you for your contribution. Further questions and comments?

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It is my honour to stand here and to comment on the speech made by my colleague the member for Toronto-Danforth. She has stated, I think quite correctly, our party's position, that we supported the main thrust of this particular bill. But she has brought up two very important points that need to be reiterated again and again and again. If you are going to be an environmentalist, if you are going to try to protect a green space, then you need to do it throughout the length and breadth of Ontario, particularly in the Niagara Escarpment, in the Oak Ridges moraine and in environmentally sensitive areas. You cannot go out with a bill such as this, as laudable as it is, and take two other contrary positions, or positions which you have not formally thought out.

On the Castle Glen development in The Blue Mountains, we recognize it's before the Ontario Municipal Board; we recognize that certain procedures have taken place within the local municipalities. But this government has an obligation, I would suggest even stronger than an obligation, a duty and a right, to stop this development as quickly as it can do so, notwithstanding the Ontario Municipal Board and notwithstanding the other safeguards and legal precedence there. They have done so before.

Governments of all stripes have taken actions in the past to stop development which is not warranted. Having been the last mayor of East York, I know only too well how a previous government, a Conservative one, stopped the Bayview ghost. They did so for a good reason. I'm asking that this government do the same for this.

I'm also asking this government to look very carefully and very strongly before you proceed to widen and lengthen the 404 north to Lake Simcoe. This may not be an environmentally sensitive thing to do.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I'm very pleased to stand today and speak in support of the Greenbelt Protection Act. This act is an important first step by our government. The proposed greenbelt will protect 100,000-plus acres of environmentally sensitive land and farmland within the Golden Horseshoe, where some of Ontario's best agricultural land is located. By creating a permanent greenbelt, the act will contain sprawl, encourage a better growth management strategy and improve our quality of life.

Both as a Toronto member and as a girl born in Weyburn, Saskatchewan, I know that we all need to work together to protect our key rural and farmland in this province. We all benefit from having productive agricultural land protected, because once it is lost, it is gone forever.

Those of us who live in urban centres benefit from our opportunities to go out into the rural communities. Rural farmers and farmers across this province are providing food to our table each and every day. In my own riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, we benefit from having the Foodland Ontario terminal in our riding, one of the

centres where food products come from across this province and are spread out across the GTA.

You need to go there one morning at 5 to see the benefits of having Ontario farmers work hard each and every day, and that we need to protect that farmland in this province. You will be amazed by the diversity of the products that come through our province and are distributed in the Ontario Foodland terminal.

As a Toronto member I applaud this first step. I think we all need to work toward ensuring that future generations have farmland protected across this province.

The Acting Chair: The member for Toronto-Danforth has two minutes to reply.

Ms Churley: Thank you. You're a very good Chair, by the way. It's nice to see you there.

Mr Hudak: What about his tie?

Ms Churley: Yeah, nice tie.

I wanted to thank everybody for their comments. I'm always particularly interested to hear from people from rural Ontario. Even though people think of me as from Toronto—which I am, I represent a Toronto area—I grew up in Labrador. There were no roads in or out, so I hardly knew what development meant, but I certainly understand what is going on environmentally in Ontario: global warming, smog, bad air, pollution, asthma. All these things come together. They're all a piece of the puzzle here and this is a very big piece of it.

I do want to say that I found it interesting that two of the Liberal members who spoke did not say anything or respond in any way to the issues that I raised as concerns. It's easy to get up and read out the notes provided about what's wonderful about this bill. It's good to let people know, but there are some real problems.

I would like to know what Liberal members think about the issues that I raise, particularly around the development, the proposed Castle Glen development—we need it stopped; we must have it stopped—and the extension of the 404 into the Simcoe area.

I've got to remind Liberal members that when they were in opposition—new people might not know this, but Mike Colle, the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, mentioned it enough—they were going to get rid of the OMB when they got into government. Now we're hearing no more about that. Instead, we hear the Minister of Municipal Affairs and other ministers say, "Oh, it's before the OMB. We can't do anything about it." What gives here? I want to see this government speak the same way they used to speak when they were in opposition and fix this problem.

1610

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): It is a privilege, on behalf of the government side, to speak in support of the Greenbelt Protection Act, 2003. With your permission, Speaker, I would like to share my time with my colleague the MPP from Scarborough Centre, Mr Brad Duguid.

There are a number of things to say about this bill, but in particular I'd like to salute at least the spirit of the

NDP's representations today in their general support of this bill. I would also like to formally address some of the objections or concerns and let the members in the third party know that this bill will in fact be going to committee, and of course that is the just and appropriate place to bring forth any amendments or suggestions or recommendations.

When we're talking about the Greenbelt Protection Act, I wish at one point that my own riding, the great riding of Etobicoke North, had its own version of a Greenbelt Protection Act. It was not that long ago that my riding was full of farmland, verdant, virgin fields and greenery everywhere. But with urban sprawl and industrial development, we are paying somewhat of a price for that. So I think we really need to salute the spirit of this Greenbelt Protection Act.

What is the greenbelt, in fact? The areas encompassed include areas in Toronto, Durham, York, Peel, Halton, Hamilton and the Oak Ridges moraine. As my colleague from Etobicoke-Lakeshore pointed out, this area affects materially the water we drink, the food we eat and the air we breathe. This bill in particular is about maintaining a coherence of policy, a moratorium for study, for public consultation, essentially allowing us—those in government who have been entrusted with the assets of Ontario—to listen to our stakeholders and to fulfill our commitments to the people; in particular addressing and really safeguarding, shepherding, some of the best agricultural land in North America. That's really what the creation of permanent greenbelt protection in the Golden Horseshoe is all about, dealing of course with lands that are vastly threatened.

It's a matter of dealing with green space, with quality of life and what I'd like to call smarter growth, to distinguish it from Smart Growth of days gone by, whether we're dealing with population growth or growth in industry or agriculture, and in particular to contain the Tory-sanctioned urban sprawl—the congestion—whether it was of traffic or of population or high-density housing. It's about maintaining economic opportunity and jobs and investment, and of course culture, tourism and recreation and resource management, as well as maintaining infrastructure, be it man-made or natural. At the end of the day it's really about changing the direction of government and delivering real and positive change; maintaining a strong economy while at the same time maintaining a clean and green environment.

As my colleagues have shared some of the details, we are looking at imposing a moratorium on the development—the further denuding, I may say—of something on the order of 600,000 acres of environmentally sensitive land and farmland within the Golden Horseshoe. The idea is to contain sprawl, yet maintain smart growth and as well as maintaining that permanent greenbelt which, at the end of the day, as I've represented here, will affect materially our quality of life.

This Greenbelt Protection Act, 2003, is really an important first step on this continued and unfinished journey. This act would in fact give us a time out for dis-

cussion of important issues that would really help us to take into account what it means to develop intelligently with a view to the economy as well as the environment. It's a discussion of key rural and agricultural protection, things, assets that we cannot afford to lose so easily and without so much as a second thought.

We must remember, as my colleagues have stated, that once this green space is lost, for all intents and purposes it is lost forever and impossible to reclaim.

Some comments about the farmland in the Golden Horseshoe: Farmland makes up something on the order of about 45% of the 9.2 million acres from Niagara to Northumberland, and north to Haliburton and Georgian Bay. In fact, some of the most productive agricultural areas lie within this Golden Horseshoe, and this, of course, is precisely the area where the development pressures are the greatest. We have urban boundary encroachments, non-farm uses, land speculation and new residential subdivisions which really have consumed that prime agricultural land, some of the best agricultural land the world has to offer.

What are some of the benefits of this agriculture? Well, agriculture is responsible for something on the order of about 15,000 direct and 35,000 indirect jobs in the York, Peel, Hamilton and Durham regions. This is a real money-maker for the province. Ontario exported, for example, \$7 billion of agri-food products in the year 2001. In fact, the sector employs something like 600,000 people in Ontario.

Just as a quick example from the realm of biology, an average hectare of corn removes something on the order of 22 tonnes of carbon dioxide from the air. So it seems that the Golden Horseshoe is doing its part to fulfill the Kyoto Protocol.

Farmland, of course, provides linkage with wildlife needs to survive in urbanizing areas, and urban dwellers, in turn, benefit from living near fresh produce. The farmland provides a buffer between urban areas and significant natural areas. For example, if you travel to places like New York City, you can actually be on the highway on some major thoroughfare, and within the space of literally 10, 15, 20 minutes, you can be in virgin countryside. We need to preserve that capacity, that capability, that wonder of the environment here in Ontario.

Part of the prime agricultural areas, in fact, contribute not only to rural and agricultural and natural heritage, but they also really emphasize or deal with the character of the greenbelt area itself. This is another incentive for us in the government to preserve it and actually move forward with this Greenbelt Protection Act.

One of the other aspects, of course, is food security and the benefits of supplying food to an ever-increasing population trend, the increases of which really know no end. This is, of course, part of the idea, the philosophy of managing growth intelligently.

I would like to speak for a moment about the Niagara tender fruit and grape lands. As I've mentioned, this is some of the best agricultural land available. This act will

help to include the tender fruit and grape lands in a proposed protection scheme, because these lands must be available to us over the long term.

For example, Niagara's tender fruit and grape lands have long been regarded nationally as a unique resource. The sand and silt soils overlaying clay in the Iroquois plain, combined with the moderating effect of Lake Ontario, Lake Erie and the Niagara Escarpment, make this area ideal for farming. That's really part of the agricultural or the environmental, the natural heritage that, really, the environmentalists tell us is another reason for us to move forward with this protection act. Half of Niagara's land is actually farm, and this is a marvellous resource. More than a resource, it is an essential asset that the government needs to preserve time going forward.

I need not speak and dwell extensively on the fact that the Niagara area is also, of course, one of the major tourist draws worldwide. Of course, the preservation of lands, access route, smart and intelligent developments, and containing what we call compact urban development, is something that we must also move toward.

In summary, this bill is about changing the direction of government, delivering real and positive change, preserving green space and maintaining our quality of life so that at the end of the day, we in the government of Ontario can go back to our stakeholders, can go back to the people of Ontario and, in particular, the individuals who live in the Golden Horseshoe, and tell them that we have done our part, moved forward in our mutual journey to preserve not only a strong economy, but at the same time, maintaining a clean and green environment.

1620
Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I'm delighted to join the debate on the Greenbelt Protection Act. This is indeed a very important act for our government and for the province.

Why are we doing this? There are a number of reasons. One is, plain and simple, that people like green space. I look at my own community and see the Rouge in the east end, one of the most treasured areas in all Canada in terms of preservation, an area that people use for recreation, an area where young people in the urban areas can go to see deer, coyotes and all kinds of interesting wildlife right in the city. People can go there and smell the wilderness. It's something that I think a lot of urban people, particularly urban children, really need to experience.

We also have Highland Creek in my area, a revitalization and naturalization project that the member for Scarborough Southwest approved some time ago when he was on Scarborough council with me. We've invested millions of dollars in revitalizing a corridor of Highland Creek, so that people can enjoy and experience the quality of life and nature in their own urban environment. So it's very important. That's one reason it's important that we look very carefully at this greenbelt area: to ensure that areas that should be preserved are preserved.

Another area is smog. We've certainly had a record number of smog days in urban areas across Ontario, and I understand the smog warnings go all the way up to Algonquin Park. It's important that we get a handle on this issue. I look at our community in Scarborough, and it's the same right across Toronto. We've had a record number of admissions to our local hospitals for respiratory illness. It continues to grow each and every year. It's an issue that I think we have to get a handle on, and curbing urban sprawl, if you want to call it that—it's called many things—is one way we can try to tackle that problem. It's important that we try to tackle it, because it's an essential part of our commitment to make this province healthier.

Third, we have to protect our waterways. Ensuring the cleanliness of the water we drink is something that benefits all of us. It's something that I think is a core value the people of this province have. We've all learned from Walkerton. Walkerton was something we wish never had to happen, but we've all learned from it. That's why it's so important that we protect those waterways.

I think back to my days as chair of works for the city of Toronto and the wet weather water flow master management plan we approved as a city, which protected the flow of water through the city and made sure that the water that flows into the lake is as clean as possible. We have a long way to go on that. We have many years and billions of dollars of investment that are going to be required if we're to accomplish that goal, but this is a good first step in ensuring that those waterways that eventually flow down into Lake Ontario are well protected. It's a very important part of ensuring that the beaches, not only in Toronto but right across the northern part of Lake Ontario, are looked after so our residents can enjoy them for many generations to come.

Another reason it's important that we really plan growth over the next number of years in the Toronto area is to try to deal with this gridlock problem. This is a very serious issue. It affects us economically, as businesses try to get to and from Toronto. More important than that, it affects our quality of life as we try to get to and from work. So it's important that we plan our future communities around Toronto very carefully, to ensure that we take full advantage of what we've learned over the years.

Fifth, preserving prime agricultural land: It's extremely important that we have good agricultural land near some of the markets they serve. We've got some prime land in this area, from the Niagara region to the Holland Landing area, some very important pieces of agricultural property.

It's important as well, because there have been some concerns expressed in the development sector and the aggregate sector about where we're going with this. Whenever there's a little bit of uncertainty that comes forward, it affects areas like the development industry.

It's important, I think, to point out that this greenbelt legislation is not anti-development legislation by any means; it's pro-good development legislation. It's look-

ing toward planned development, which is very, very important. Development and growth have to take into consideration our key agricultural lands, our environmentally sensitive lands, the lands that we want to preserve for recreational purposes. That's just planned development. It's good development. It's something that I think our development industry recognizes.

But at the same time, as we put a freeze on development throughout this area, there's some uncertainty related to that. I think it's important that that industry recognizes that our government understands the importance of that industry. We understand that construction is a \$30-billion industry in our province. We understand that it employs over 270,000 people across Ontario. We understand that our economic health as a province depends very much on a healthy development industry in Ontario as well.

Our housing starts have been very healthy over the last number of years; 62,500 housing starts last year. That's considerably higher than 10 years ago, when it was around 25,000. So it's a healthy industry right now, and it's important that we send out the message that this legislation should not impact that industry. It's important that in fact, as we move forward and determine what pieces of property within the greenbelt are good for development and what pieces of property are not, we'll be lending further certainty to development in the 905 and greater Toronto area as a result of this legislation.

It's also important as well that we acknowledge the importance of our aggregate industry. The aggregate industry, of course, serves the construction industry. It's billions of dollars in aggregate every year that comes out of the greater Toronto area. It's an important part of our economy, and it's important that we recognize that as we move forward with this exercise as well. There are 7,000 people directly employed in our aggregate industry; 34,000 people indirectly employed. That's a lot of jobs. It's something that I think we have to be very conscious of, and in fact we are. It's important that we take that into consideration.

It's even an important part of our public sector work. Our local aggregate industries have to contribute to something like 53% of the roads and highways that we construct here, so that's important as well; and 60% of the product that goes into our transportation costs actually comes from our local aggregate industries. So this is an industry that this government must pay close attention to. It's an industry that you must be sensitive to. It's something that we'll be balancing very, very closely with our needs as we move forward with our changes to the greenbelt.

One thing we've done that's very important is that we've appointed a Greenbelt Task Force that's very representative of all of the stakeholders, whether it be environmentalists, agriculture and rural land use, farm representatives, ecologists, the aggregate industry, as I talked about earlier, developer representatives or legal representatives. All of those stakeholders are on this task force playing a key role. That's important. That's part of

how this government is showing that it's reaching out to all stakeholders as we move forward with our policies. We're not just blindly moving forward and doing things by the seat of our pants. We're planning these things out and consulting with people to make sure that the important initiatives we move forward with take into consideration all of the sensitivities of those stakeholders; that at the end of the day, the primary interests we're serving are the interests of the people of Ontario.

I think people are looking to this government for leadership in this area, and I think we're showing that in moving very boldly, something that's never been done before in this area. We have one chance, one opportunity as a government, to make this right, because if we do not get a handle on the overall planning issues in the greater Toronto area now, it will be too late five, 10, 15, 20 years from now to right that wrong.

That's why we're taking a big-picture approach to planning in the greater Toronto area. I think it's in everybody's interest. I think it's in the local municipalities' interests that are impacted; it's in the developers' interests and the builders' interests; and it's definitely in the environmentalists' interests to make sure that we do this right, that we make every effort to ensure that we preserve the land in this area that should be preserved, the land that is environmentally sensitive, and that we free up the land in this area that is good for development, because some of this greenbelt will have to be developed. We know that. We've known that from the beginning. That's not new to anybody. It's part of what the task force is looking at right now. So we're looking forward to moving forward. We're looking forward to seeing the work of this task force. We'll ensure that it's done in a timely manner so we can return certainty to the development industry and return certainty to the communities around the 905. I'm very pleased to have taken part in this debate.

1630

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I just barely made it back for my comment. First of all, I thank you for allowing me to take part today in this comment. I've had a lot of discussions on this bill with my colleague and seatmate Julia Munro from York North, who has some very strong concerns about this particular piece of legislation.

One thing that I'm really concerned about is the actual lines that have been drawn in the greenbelt space. I don't think anybody questions the need for smart growth, for legislation to protect our green spaces, but one of the concerns that we have in Simcoe county is—Ms Churley for Toronto-Danforth mentioned it earlier—leapfrogging. We think that is exactly what could happen here to Simcoe county. I'm not so sure the planning community—I'm not sure even the county wants a great deal more growth than we've actually seen in the past. People want the rural quality of life. There's nothing wrong with the small communities like the Bradfords and the Allistons etc growing at a controlled pace. There's

nothing wrong with that at all. But we're really concerned about long-term negative environmental effects on the county of Simcoe. I look forward to these types of comments, not only in the hearings but throughout the rest of the debate, because I think that although you try to protect one area of the province, you may in fact be having a negative effect on another part of the province, and with our strong economy and Ontario being the location where many people in the world like to live, it's something we have to take very seriously.

Mr Prue: I listened intently to the two members who spoke, the members for Etobicoke North and Scarborough Centre. I have to tell you that with much of what they said one could not find fault. They are talking in general terms about how much we all need to do work for the environment, how we need to protect our farmland and how we have to go slowly in development to make sure we do not cause any harm to the very precious resources that we have here in Ontario. I thank them for those thoughts, but I have to say this, in particular to the member for Scarborough Centre.

Yesterday was a landmark decision in this province when the minister stood up and announced that we were going to stop the development of the Adams mine. I commend the minister for having made that statement, but I have to question the member for Scarborough Centre and his commitment to this whole process of the environment. As I remember, only a couple of years ago, he was one of the lead speakers in favour of the Adams mine at the city of Toronto. In fact, he was in favour of that to the extent that he spoke to it day after day while we were trying—at least I was—to shut it down. So I have to question where the commitment is around all this, although the words, I must suggest, were very nice.

I hope that the new atmosphere of Queen's Park and of the province has brought some sense around this issue. It certainly seems so from what I heard today. I want to remind all members that the province has a stake in stopping developments like Castle Glen. Just a couple that come immediately to mind in the Toronto area: the Spadina Expressway—

Ms Churley: Bill Davis.

Mr Prue: Bill Davis—the Brickworks by Lily Munro and, again, the Bayview ghost that was happening during the time of John Robarts. It can be done; it needs to be done. Please address this in committee.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I'm delighted to speak briefly on Bill 27, the Greenbelt Protection Act. As a rural member—Perth-Middlesex is the largest rural riding in southwestern Ontario, Mr Speaker, as you well know as a neighbouring riding—we are on the other side of the greenbelt act. We are on the other side of the line. What I wanted to talk about is that balance that we need in rural Ontario, the balance of rural versus urban. I tell people that, though I grew up in the small town of Trenton, my wife's family is from the even smaller village of Marmora. People say, "Are you rural?" I tell people, "If you're doing your dishes and you look

out the window and you see a cow, then you know that you're in rural Ontario."

I know that even in the great city of Stratford, where I live, within two kilometres of my house, the centre of the urban part of Perth-Middlesex, you're bound to find a pig or a cow or a chicken, because we're at the heart of that. What's important for us in rural Ontario is that there is a balance. I'm proud that our government is keeping the commitment that we made during the election in regard to drawing a line across Ontario, where we say that we're going to contain urban sprawl, because urban sprawl eats up that rich agricultural land that we all need so desperately so that we can have food self-sufficiency, so that we can have safe, secure, affordable food, grown right here in Ontario. That is the security that we need as a society.

So I'm very, very pleased that we're doing something about this balance, because that will be the template that we can use across Ontario as we deal with that point of friction that is always between the urban and the rural parts of Ontario. I'd like to commend both the members for Etobicoke North and Scarborough Centre for speaking so eloquently on the bill, and thank you for allowing me to participate in the debate.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It is indeed my pleasure this afternoon to speak for the next minute and a half, which I guess is my time, on Bill 27. In fact, I put on the record here, to start with—I will be speaking in some detail in a few minutes—that you really can't look at this planning intrusion, this land use intrusion by the now Liberal government, without looking at both bills, 26 and 27. I know there's some argument, and there has been for almost a decade now, about provincial planning policy. The argument, from the NDP forward, basically has been the debate around the whole issue of "have regard to" planning policy or "consistent with." That has really been the essence of the whole debate. I can tell you that there's still much division with respect to whether the government should impose its centralized thinking, urbanized view of the world on all parts of Ontario. Is it much more important to allow them some degree of flexibility?

Now, that being said, every member on this side puts the environment first. We created the greatest network of Lands for Life in this province. It was Bill Davis who put the escarpment commission in place and it was we who put the Oak Ridges moraine act in place. Let's not forget that history is the teacher of what we've put in place. It's been our government, the Conservative government of Ontario that's built the strong province. It's under those principles that we've also allowed the degree of flexibility, which is only respectful of local and regional levels of government.

The implication with much of what I'm hearing from the current government, the Liberal government, is that it's going to be run from the minister's office, whether it's health care, George Smitherman, Bill 8; whether it's—who else would it be over there—Gerard Kennedy, for instance, on education. It's all going to be run from

Toronto. I can tell you, the people of Durham are fed up with it. We need to have some flexibility to respond to our own particular needs.

1640

The Acting Speaker: You have two minutes to reply.

Mr Duguid: My thanks to the members for Simcoe North, Perth-Middlesex, Beaches-East York and even the member for Durham for his comments, negative as they may have been. Let me start off by suggesting that I was surprised by the member from Durham's comments, given the record of his government over the last number of years when it comes to wholesale, free-for-all development outside Toronto—whatever the developers wanted, they got. I spoke about the importance of the development industry, and I think we all understand and recognize that. But at the same time, there have to be controls and the public interest has to be the first priority.

It was obvious over the last number of years that there was no control over what was being suggested. It was a piecemeal approach that I think, frankly, would have cost generation upon generation of Ontarians not only their clean air, not only their water, but their quality of life. Thank goodness we have a Premier and a government that recognize the importance of getting a handle on development in the greater Toronto area and working with the development community, the aggregate community, the agricultural community and environmentalists to do what is in the best interests of the people of Ontario. That's change that the people of this province are looking forward to.

I will say we have some serious challenges in front of us. We've got 115,000 people coming to the greater Toronto area each and every year. We've seen 2.3 million people settle here between 1981 and 2001. That's a lot of people we have to adjust to. It's like a small town locating in the greater Toronto area every single year. It's going to take some time and some effort. This Premier and this government are up to it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for permitting me the opportunity to speak on this important bill.

I will only say that most of my experience in this area will be of a general nature, stemming from my time in local and regional government. In fact, I think my privilege to being here is that all politics is local. All policies should respond first to the people and the area you're elected to represent and then look at the greater good for the greater number. That's the broad public policy discussion that should take place here; in fact, this is the right place for it.

For those viewing this afternoon, we are specifically dealing with order G27, the adjourned debate on second reading of Bill 27, An Act to establish a greenbelt study area and to amend the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act. They'll probably have to amend it, because one of their election promises was that they were going to cancel all development on the Oak Ridges moraine. Yeah, right. Another broken promise—that's no surprise.

But as I said in my short time before this, one can't look at Bill 27, which is the greenbelt issue, without looking at Bill 26, which is really the fundamental bill, and that bill's title is An Act to amend the Planning Act. I'm going to start by giving a small, respectful statement with regard to the debate adjourned earlier on Bill 27 and to my good friend the member from York North, Julia Munro.

Julia Munro, basically, has been a stalwart, consistent contributor on behalf of her constituents and, I believe, to the broader debate on this issue of planning and community building. She's put forward a number of extremely important observations and recommendations, and I think the other side of the House should at least listen respectfully. Often I'm discouraged, because I thought they were going to be the new form of government and, to this point, it has been somewhat disappointing for us. There are ways to fix this problem, respecting the rights of landholders and the development industry as a "bad" industry.

I guess the point for me is that we recognize the province of Ontario is expanding. Growth and population are expanding. To some extent, I understand and agree with the intensification argument; that is, we should make better use of infrastructure and land that are currently developed and serviced. Putting it bluntly, I think that intensification is intensifying the human condition: more people in less space. There is a place for that. Urban communities need to make efficient use of space—no question about it—and we should have regard to our environment because, as I said earlier, that's the agricultural land that grows the food we eat. I don't disrespect any of those arguments. In fact, the Niagara Escarpment is a testimony to having green space protected permanently for posterity, as well as the Oak Ridges moraine act, which we enacted, the Lands for Life program that Chris Hodgson, when he was minister, brought forward as well. So there have been many good things done. In fact under the Planning Act—I'm going back to Bill 26 now—under the pressure of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association and the Ontario Municipal Association, a large city group, we responded to them by giving them flexibility. The NDP planning guideline on policy was that it must be consistent, rigorously consistent, with wetlands or other issues. The municipalities, both lower-tier and upper-tier municipalities, wanted some degree of flexibility.

I, for one, respect the lower tiers of government. They're closer to the people and they in many respects—I think of David Crone, who's the director of planning, and Gregory Georgieff, who was the director of planning for the region of Durham—are people who do put their community first and the appropriate use of land first. I think the mayors and other councillors do have regard for their unique needs within the community. I could also go on and say that Bill 26 takes that autonomy, I think disrespectfully, away from lower tiers of government. I don't know whether they have it right. I think time will tell how much of this will have to be resolved in some

court or in some litigious manner. That, again, adds more cost to the taxpayer.

I'm going to read Bill 26 just to show you some of the implications with the Planning Act here. The preamble to Bill 26: "The purpose of the bill is to change the criteria that must be met when any decision, comment, submission or advice is made or provided by a municipality, local board, planning board, the provincial government or a board, commission or agency of the province government that affects a land use planning manner." So they're in the box there. They must be consistent. "The decisions, comments, submissions and advice must be 'consistent with,'" as I said earlier, "policy"—provincial policy—"statements issued by the minister." So the minister has taken back, Mr Gerretsen has taken back, complete control, as George Smitherman has in health.

It's going to be run from Toronto, so that's the Liberal way. In Ottawa they run it from Ottawa and they don't pay any attention to anyone else. The issue here is "having regard to." I don't think the debate is over. I think once you do it, you may think you're doing the right thing. I see that many members here have served as mayor and other roles: Brad Duguid, and certainly the member from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge as well.

The bill also provides and increases the time period for making decisions, before appeals may be made to the Ontario Municipal Board, from 90 to 180 days. So they've doubled the length of time in the big vacuum of consultation or dispute resolution. "Clauses 22(1)(b) and 22(2)(b) of the act are amended to remove the deadline of 65 days in which a municipality or planning board" had to file official planned amendments.

As most people know, all of these land use decisions take rigorous amounts of time locally. There's application for a rezoning, there are public hearings, then there's a submission, and there's subdivision or whatever actual use is going to be made of that land. So there is due diligence there. They do look at the specific terrain and other implications with the property and its ultimate use.

But I say to you that I am speaking today in support of lower-tier and upper-tier municipalities. They are elected people, they are accountable, they're closer to the people and they're not in some Toronto office. I believe that they should be held accountable. I believe there should be a disputes mechanism, and that's called the Ontario Municipal Board. Reform it if you wish, but I think it is disrespectful to take that elected decision and privilege away from them. I could go on at some length with Bill 26.

Bill 27: It's important to look at what this is actually doing. I'll just read a small bit of the explanatory notes here, "The power of municipalities in respect of land use planning matters is restricted in relation to land in the greenbelt study area that is outside an urban settlement area." It goes on a little bit here, "Similarly, no applications may be made in respect of these matters and all applications, referrals, hearings, appeals and procedures

before a joint board under the Consolidated Hearings Act or the Ontario Municipal Board with respect to these matters are stayed."

1650

They've overridden the courts, technically a quasi-judicial body, the Ontario Municipal Board; another centralization of authority and control right back to Dalton's office. Actually, the centre runs it all. That's the sad part here. I see it becoming more and more a concentration of power right in—well, I don't know whether it's Dalton's office or Greg Sorbara's. I think Greg Sorbara, the Minister of Finance, has probably more authority than the Premier. He's the guy who recruited most of the new members here and he's the guy who was president of the party. He's the guy who was the chair of the audit committee of Royal Group Technologies. I think he's kind of running it all, technically.

I think, in fact, without imputing any kind of motive, the Sorbara Group is very heavily involved in land development, land holdings and land management. I just bring that to the people here to see if this control—I know the authority he had under the Ontario Securities Commission has been given to Mr Phillips, and I'm wondering if maybe he should absolve himself of some of the municipal stuff in cabinet.

Now, how much acceptance is there for this Bill 27? The first reference for me is always the municipal people. That's where I came from, and that's where each of us here, to the greatest extent, came from. Mr Hardeman was a warden and reeve. Almost everywhere I look around—

The Acting Speaker: Would the member please take his seat. I just wish to remind the member that it's inappropriate to refer to a member by his given surname. I would ask him to use the members' riding names, as he knows.

Mr O'Toole: I do respect that and I appreciate that, Mr Speaker. In fact, you're right. It just shows the genuineness of—I take this very personally, and I'm now speaking for the region of Durham; I'm actually speaking on behalf of Roger Anderson and his response to Bill 27 and Bill 26. I'm going to read it, because I wouldn't want to impugn any kind of motives here. He's the chair of the region of Durham. Now, he's not elected, but that's a debate for another day. We'll leave it at that.

This is actually from the This Week paper, which is kind of a Metroland, a subtext Toronto Star kind of paper. I understand that. February 27, 2004: "Chair Upset over Greenbelt Snub." It's the snub that implies the real arrogance that I see emerging here, and very early in the mandate too. It's that smug snub, that arrogance.

"Roger Anderson isn't happy with the committee that's going to make recommendations on a permanent greenbelt in the Golden Horseshoe. The Durham region chairman is upset the task force is being chaired by the mayor of a municipality that the Oak Ridges moraine doesn't even run through, Burlington mayor Bob MacIsaac. Also upsetting to Anderson is that there are no other politicians on the task force and there is only one

representative from Durham. 'It's just a poor committee with no representation, and certainly not capable of making decisions that affect eight or 10 or 12 municipalities,' Mr Anderson said." That's a direct quote. I'll be sending this, so if there's any interjections here, I'll be citing you and sending it to Mr Anderson, who at the moment is not elected, but he certainly is the chair.

"It's just a poor committee," as I said before. "The McGuinty government announced a 13-member Greenbelt Task Force last week. The appointment to the task force followed the introduction of the proposed Greenbelt Protection Act in December, which, if passed, would create a greenbelt study area"—a stall mechanism; that's code language—"on the Golden Horseshoe, imposing a one-year moratorium on new urban development on rural agricultural lands within this area and clarifying the transition provision on development applications relating to the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act. Mr Anderson said, "The act takes power away from lower-tier municipalities...." Shameful.

This is another quote: "We should be able to decide where our greenbelt should be," he said. "You can't give the municipality the ability to plan and then take it away. It would certainly have an impact on the way municipalities plan their futures." He said one of the province's decisions, the one-year moratorium, "prevents further development across Ontario. This would stall growth in Durham, where municipalities such as Pickering have essentially run out of urban land."

I could go on in this, but the whole point is, I was at a public meeting, and the point being made was this: These were new residents, new constituents of mine whom I'm flattered to represent. I'd encourage you to contact my office regardless of your political affiliation, because we're there to serve and listen.

They were saying they were surprised that the prices of the lots just around them had doubled. This is the immediate impact of the second or third decision. They raised the taxes in Bill 4, they've raised the electricity rates in another bill, and the list of raising taxes goes on. In fact, what they're doing now is raising the price of land. I'm going to put this simply for you. If you raise the price of the land, you are raising the assessment base. Then you apply the tax rate to the assessment base and you know what happens: Your taxes double. If what you owned was \$30,000, now it's \$60,000, and the tax rate stays the same. Your taxes have just doubled.

When you dry up the supply of serviced land and you dry up the supply of affordable housing, house prices go up. This, to me, has implications far beyond the debate I've heard so far. What it's saying to me is that the Premier of the province is actually increasing the cost of housing, and he's increasing taxes without ever saying he's increased taxes. So this is the chicanery of it all, this is the treachery that I say is implicit in much of the bill here.

This is the regional spokesperson, Mr Anderson, that I put on the table. I have a great deal of respect for Mr

Anderson. He is a very capable spokesman for the region. I do listen and it's a privilege to work with him.

What I'm saying here is that this is the position of the town of Whitby. The mayor there, whom I have a great deal of respect for—a good friend of mine, actually; well, a friend in that he's municipal and I work with him—and a great spokesperson for the community of Whitby. With respect to the Planning Act—because as I said, these two are united; 26 and 27 are sort of under one cover—at a meeting of the council held on March 8, 2004, the council of the town of Whitby passed the following resolution:

"That the planning director's report, item 47-4 be forwarded to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs as the town of Whitby's input on Bill 26;

"That the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, AMO, be advised that the town of Whitby does not support the amendments to insert the new phrase 'be consistent with.'"

There it is. They don't have any respect, and this is the frustrating part of participating in these debates. I'm getting the sense that they're not listening now. They didn't listen to the member from York North; they're not apparently listening to what I'm saying. It leaves me with the question and the sense of vulnerability that they're not listening to the people of Ontario. My constituents aren't being heard.

In fact, I'm aware of a small application that isn't at the plan of subdivision level yet, a small piece of property, which I would call a hamlet infill. Some of you who have worked at the municipal level would know what that means. It's a parcel of land with houses on both sides but across the road it's never been developed; there's never been a development application on it. This person was going to build sustainable homes, using the latest technology for energy efficiency; a small entrepreneurial engineering guy whom I met with; a great family.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): What's the zoning?

Mr O'Toole: The zoning is residential because it's in a residential area, and it was a rezoning application. There's no question that that's first, and that was passed by the town. Then, bingo, this thing comes in, and these environmentally friendly houses cannot be built. This is as a direct result of the Minister of Municipal Affairs interfering unnecessarily and without much description about his overarching authority. It's just a permanent freeze. As I told you, in the preamble of the bill, all of these applications are nullified. What kind of authority is he taking on himself? Now, these 10 properties, where people were interested in purchasing and building sustainable homes, have been thwarted. It's just unconscionable. In fact, I've been looking through a number of magazines here, the Ontario Corn Producers and Farming Today magazines, and I don't see any group that's particularly impressed with this whole bill, 26 and 27.

I really did meet with the head of the Ontario Home Builders' Association, who happens to be one of my constituents. I have a great deal of time for him because he builds quality homes. How important is this aspect of the economy? Well, I'll tell you. Last year, I believe the home builders of Ontario built something in excess of 85,000 homes. Each one of those homes represents a certain number of man-hours, but they also build jobs and communities.

1700

The Ontario Home Builders' Association made a submission to the pre-budget hearings. They've made submissions on Bills 26 and 27. They've made some suggestions on these bills—and in my two minutes I'll probably have enough time to respond—that there needs to be less intrusion into people's lives by this government. The rules can be clear and consistent where it's inappropriate to build, but municipal leaders—councillors, mayors, regional councillors and regional chairs—know their communities. They've been elected locally. They have a three-year term, and the people can turf them out if they don't respect the environment.

What I'm actually concerned about here is that we have a government now that has become so centralized and so bureaucratic that they're taking all of the control away from the people of Ontario in energy. Now that their energy is going up, what recourse does the consumer have? Very little. I'm seeing the same thing in education, health and municipal affairs. I think there are going to be tolls on Highway 69. I think there is going to be re-testing for driver's licences. The drug benefit plan is being removed. Is there no end to the litany of inflicting of hardship on the people of Ontario?

I'm moved almost to tears when I think that the people of Ontario voted for something and they didn't get it. What they got is a Toronto-centred cabinet. Eight ministers in that cabinet are from Toronto. David Miller has more control than the people of Durham, and I'm opposed to that.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Churley: I'm almost in tears, too, but for different reasons. It's always a pleasure to listen to the member for Durham—I mean that—but we are so on opposite ends of this issue that it really does almost bring me to tears.

Mr O'Toole: Did you ride your bike in today?

Ms Churley: No, too cold.

The interesting thing is that there's a contradiction in some of the views, depending on how you figure it's going to affect you and your constituents, and I know the member is trying to stand up for some of his constituents.

Let's talk about intensive hog farms for a moment. The Tories and in fact the Liberals support this as well. They have agreed that the province should be in charge of that kind of land use; that you take that away from municipalities like Huron and outside Ottawa and other areas I'm hearing from, and not allow the municipalities in those jurisdictions to make those very important decisions for the land use in their own area. So on one hand, from one side of the mouth, you hear, "In this case,

you shouldn't take the powers away from the particular jurisdiction," but on the other hand, when it comes to huge intensive hog farms, they're saying, "That's OK; the province should set the rules for that and take that kind of land use planning away from the municipalities." I don't think you can have it both ways.

The reason why it's important that the province have control over our land use when it comes to protecting the environment is because of what has happened over many years. We brought in a new green Planning Act; the Tories threw it out. There was this big vacuum; all these bad things happened. This is a step to try and fix some of the problems that we've seen building up over the years. That's what's going on here.

Mrs Van Bommel: At some point or another, I think the member from Toronto-Danforth and I will have to have a discussion about intensive livestock operations, but at this point I'd like to address the member from Durham and his concerns around the task force and the makeup of that task force.

The task force is made up of a broad section of stakeholders.

Mr O'Toole: That's in your notes.

Mrs Van Bommel: I was actually involved in the selection of some of these people, so I do know how some of them came.

Mr O'Toole: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I think that is imputing motive here. She interfered in an appointment process.

Mrs Van Bommel: No, I didn't.

The Acting Speaker: Parliamentary assistant, conclude your comments.

Mrs Van Bommel: I do have knowledge of who these people are.

Mr O'Toole: Greg Sorbara had knowledge of who—

Mrs Van Bommel: Oh, dear. I think I'll have to pick my words very carefully for the member from Durham, obviously.

He has concerns about leadership. He mentioned that he was concerned about Mayor MacIsaac. I think Mayor MacIsaac has a very strong voice on behalf of municipalities. Municipalities are being represented, as are other stakeholders. They're all being invited to participate in meetings and workshops that are being done.

Actually, one of them has already been done in Durham, and others are scheduled for Niagara, Caledonia and Oakville. These will take into consideration and hear from the stakeholders, so that everyone has a chance to voice their opinions on how they feel about the greenbelt. I think that's what we wanted to do. The task force is there to help facilitate that kind of participation from the stakeholders.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I'm so glad to have this early opportunity to comment on the speech. I thought it was rather interesting, because as my good colleague the member from Riverdale—

Ms Churley: Toronto-Danforth.

Mr Bisson:—now Toronto-Danforth; Riverdale, the old riding, is where we really identify the member for Toronto-Danforth, but that's another story.

There's really an interesting debate about this, because the reality is that the Tories are diametrically opposed to the position that both New Democrats and Liberals have taken on this particular issue. I think it's rather interesting to watch, as debate unfolds from that perspective, that the dynamics have somewhat changed.

Also, I remember the election we had somewhere around six or seven months ago. The Premier promised Ontarians that if elected to government, there would be no new development on the Oak Ridges moraine. Do you remember that promise? I remember that promise well. What happened after the election? Not only did he break that promise, but he did it times four by four by four, because he allowed 6,000 new houses to be built on the Oak Ridges moraine.

I want to comment, because that's part of what this bill is all about, kind of indirectly; and because it does deal with the Oak Ridges moraine, I want to say that this is yet another election promise broken by the Liberal government when it comes to the commitment it made to the voters of Ontario on no development on the Oak Ridges moraine.

I know that my good friend Mr O'Toole, the member from Durham, wanted to say that in his speech. But because he was limited to 20 minutes because of the rule changes the Conservatives made to the standing orders that limit our time in debate, he didn't have a chance to talk about that. I know now that if he had the opportunity, he'd like to revoke those rule changes so we're not limited to 20 minutes and have far more time to debate. I know Mr O'Toole, the member from Durham, if given the opportunity, would certainly have talked about the broken promise the Liberals made when it comes to the Oak Ridges moraine, if he had had enough time.

The Acting Speaker: We have time for one further question or comment.

Seeing none, I recognize the member for Durham. You have two minutes to reply.

Mr O'Toole: To the members for Toronto-Danforth, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and Timmins-James Bay, who had the courage to respond, I appreciate it.

Just in passing, I think there is a difference between the NDP position and our position, and that's fair. That's what this debate is about. I believe the opposition has a role to point out weaknesses in proposed legislation. That is our duty, not to say I don't support many of their ideas.

More importantly, I commend the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for making a strong voice for the agricultural committee, because she knows of what she speaks. I have read her resumé and realize that this is important.

I am disappointed that Marcel Beaubien, the former member, is not here as an elected member. But I can tell you that he is here today. He's making a presentation in committee room 2. The work he's done on property

assessment is something you should pay attention to. The CLT group is meeting there today.

But I think there was another meeting yesterday—I know this isn't related to the bill. It's quite interesting, for those who are new here, that yesterday the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors was here. The Association of Ontario Land Surveyors brought some very important points to the table.

Mr Wilkinson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: When the member from Durham actually gets up in the House and tells us he's not going to speak to the bill we're debating, surely to God we could ask him to speak to the bill.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member to conclude his comments.

1710

Mr O'Toole: It's actually information for the just-elected members who don't know anything more than the crib notes they're given to read.

I would say that the land surveyors do have the mapping of Ontario, which is all part of planning and land use. They made a presentation yesterday, and I encourage you to pick up their kit, because it is instructive in terms of some of the minute questions in land surveying and portions of property that aren't properly surveyed. These records are integral to the whole assessment system, and in fact to the whole issue of the use of property, its zoning and ultimate end use, and to the service of the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I will be sharing my time with my colleague the member for Don Valley West. Let me speak on behalf of the people of Thornhill and Concord. But before doing that, let me say thank you to Mr Colle, the member for Eglinton-Lawrence. Prior to the election on October 2, he took the time to come to Thornhill and speak to the people about the greenbelt issue, when the Liberal Party was looking at shaping a policy that would address a major problem in the greater Toronto area; that is, to deal with growth that was taking place all over under the Conservative Party of Ontario.

Bill 27 is an act to establish a green belt study area. Of course many of us, in particular in the 905 area, have always looked for leadership from the provincial government on this. As all of us know, one of reasons the people in the 905 area want to see a greenbelt area preserved is so our community will be able to do better planning and plan future development in areas where services can be provided.

Bill 27 will impose a moratorium on applications that permit urban uses on rural and agriculture land outside approved urban boundaries within the study area. It will also enhance our quality of life by containing sprawl and encouraging smart growth inside a permanent greenbelt. It will also give the minister the power to halt ongoing proceedings before the Ontario Municipal Board if greenbelt lands are at issue. Bill 27 is important because it will create 600 acres of Golden Horseshoe greenbelt from Niagara Falls to Lake Scugog and beyond.

As I was saying before, in the area I represent—that is, Thornhill and Concord—we are experiencing significant gridlock, a shortage of hospital beds and a shortage of social services. One of the reasons is that in the past construction has taken place all over without proper controls. Bill 27 will make a major plan for many years to come.

At the municipal level, contrary to the provincial level, we usually plan for 20 to 25 years to make sure that what takes place will make sense in the long term. This bill will allow us to do exactly that. We will take a significant amount of land outside what's considered the 905 belt and allow the government to do all the planning necessary so that whatever is allowed will be planned properly and will get leadership from the province of Ontario instead of allowing municipalities all over the area to make their own decisions without an overall plan for the entire area.

In planning for the long term, we must make sure the services that will be provided are consistent with what the municipalities in question enjoy at this time. One area we unfortunately lack, as I said, is social services; in particular, hospitals, public transportation and all the services that people in an urban area normally expect. I believe that when the province establishes areas where development can take place and areas where development should not take place, we must ensure that planning for those social services and infrastructure that I'm referring to must be paid by new development. I believe that the time the government will take will allow that to take place.

We must convince the development industry that any new development must pay for needed services. Therefore, it must be part of the local area. Those costs must be forced, must be implemented within a new local area for any municipality that will be affected. In particular, I'm referring to public transportation and hospital beds. There is a need in new areas to provide that transportation and those hospital beds. The municipality cannot afford to come up with the funding to provide those facilities. At the same time, in my opinion, it is not proper that the province must pay most of those costs, because in fact those costs should be part of any new area which is built.

There are benefits to building new areas and some of those benefits must be shared with Ontarians. Therefore, funding must be provided, potentially, in what I call a lot levy. This is a process that many of us have spoken of in the past. It isn't there yet, and of course I encourage my party and all of us in the House to speak out on those issues that are so important for new areas such as Thornhill, Concord, the city of Vaughan, the town of Markham and every other municipality within the 905 belt.

It isn't proper any more, in my opinion, to expect that the province of Ontario pays all those costs, or that the municipality pays all those costs, because we just don't seem to be able to afford that. But if we can come up with a policy whereby new development will absorb a

certain share of those costs, then surely we will be doing a service to the entire province, both to those affected who are lacking services today because of that and of course to Ontarians who shouldn't be paying for those services. Those services should be paid by those developers, in particular those developers who are getting a financial benefit by getting additional lands available for development.

I can say to the House that in the past the people of Thornhill and Concord have spoken strongly about the pace of growth itself. I expect that all of us will pay significant attention to the position that the people of Thornhill and Concord have shown. In particular, I think a levy on public transportation must be given significant attention. We are looking at providing bus lines, we are looking at providing subway lines in some areas, and those costs will be significant. We're talking about billions of dollars of expenditure which will provide more efficient movement of people and goods, which will be good for the economy and which will give all of us an economic benefit.

At the same time, grid lock has been caused, in my opinion, by additional development which is not planned properly, all over the GTA in particular. Therefore, a levy that would be allocated for public transportation purposes is a must and must be taken very seriously. I believe that if discussion takes place among the beneficiaries of all that, I can see many people seeing the benefits of building a measure of public infrastructure that would allow us to open up new areas and at the same time provide the density that is necessary. We cannot afford to just build homes. We need to build a complete infrastructure with transportation but also with commercial, manufacturing and industrial developments, so that together we will not only build a city which is complete by creating jobs and providing affordable housing, but at the same time we will provide public transportation which allows people to go back to where they used to live, to move from one area of a municipality to the other, to move from region to region or municipality to municipality. It is all possible as long as we concentrate on it. Of course, Thornhill and Concord, the area I represent, want those types of services, and I encourage all of us to pay the attention needed to achieve that.

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The Acting Speaker: Carrying on, I'm pleased to recognize the member for Don Valley West.

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I'm happy to speak to Bill 27, the Greenbelt Protection Act. I see this legislation as an opportunity to change the way we think about development, to change the way we think about land use. I believe what this bill will do is strengthen the communities of the GTA, promote their vibrant economies, and safeguard our and their precious resources.

I've been following this debate quite closely, and I must say that I've been particularly disappointed by the analysis offered by the official opposition—not that that

is a group I look to for vision. But the member for Durham responded, not today—

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): You can always hope.

Ms Wynne: Hope springs eternal. The member for Durham, in his original comments, talked about this bill as mere government interference. What he said was, “What I see in this bill is more government interference.” So I asked myself what exactly this bill will do that could possibly be interpreted as “more government interference.” What I read is responsible policy.

Here’s what Bill 27 will do, if passed: At a time when, as noted by the minister, the land already designated for development is sufficient to allow for some 15 to 20 years’ worth of development, this bill places a one-year hold on the zoning of more land for development. That year will allow the time needed to study how best to use the land, what to protect and what can be developed.

This bill will allow the government to promote the public interest by working for the protection of our ecosystem, the retention of excellent farmland needed to ensure our ability to produce the food we eat, and the devising of a well-thought-out plan for the development of the GTA. “Well-thought-out” is the key here. That’s what this bill will allow, and that’s what the member for Durham calls government interference. It seems that, by his account, the promotion of all those important things—a healthy environment, a secure source of food, sustainable development of the region—are not the government’s role. Instead, the role of the government on this file should be to ensure the unfettered ability of anyone who owns land to do with it as they will, according to their own time frame.

I see it a little differently. I don’t call this bill interference; I call it a step in the direction of more responsible planning. Toronto has been referred to, first by Robert Fulford, as the “accidental city,” and I think it’s time to change that. It’s time for this forward-looking legislation that will build stronger, more livable, more environmentally sustainable communities in this province, because this bill sets a framework in place that can be used in other parts of the province.

For me, though, the extent to which a positive vision for change is lacking across the way was made most painfully clear in the remarks of the member for York North. The member for York North offered us the following:

“I think there’s no question, certainly speaking as a member from the northern part of York region, that none of us likes sprawl for its own sake. I think there’s common agreement on that. We’re also very unhappy with the ancillary effects of that: the gridlock, pollution, rundown infrastructure and waste of land.

“I think there’s a great deal of agreement on this, but the problem when we look at this particular piece of legislation is that it’s not the way to deal with this. The greenbelt legislation is not a restriction on sprawl; it is an end of development.”

The amazing thing about the remarks of the member for York North is that she can identify the problem; she just can’t lead us and herself to the logical conclusion of her own observations. And she’s right: Sprawl for its own sake is bad. Its ancillary effects—the gridlock, the pollution, the rundown and, I’d add, unaffordable infrastructure, the waste of land—are all bad.

But what is her solution to this? Do nothing. Stick with the processes already in place. The member recognizes that the current policies do not work, she identifies the myriad problems they create, and yet she recommends that we retain them. Her words, I believe, were the following: “They should have followed what was done previously by the PC government with Smart Growth.” With all due respect, I’m forced to ask the House, was what the previous government was doing on this file working? I think the answer has to be a resounding no, and for the many reasons the member from York North herself identified.

The failure to impose an outside boundary on the GTA has led to urban sprawl. That has led to long commutes and gridlock in communities that can’t meaningfully be served by public transit; it has led to costly and crumbling infrastructure; and it has led, and unless stopped will continue to lead, to the destruction of some of the best farmland in the province and natural features important to our ecosystem.

Beyond the lack of vision, what did we hear from across the way? We heard scaremongering. I think we have to be attentive to this kind of scaremongering, which really does not reflect the truth. The member from York North suggested that this bill would bring “an end of development.” That’s not what the Greater Toronto Home Builders’ Association is saying. In their March submission on this bill, the Greater Toronto Home Builders’ Association called on the government to promote intensification as the way to offset the decreased amount of land that may be available to development. This makes sense. We have to keep developing homes; we have to keep building places for people to live. But we have to do it differently.

Now I ask, when the home builders’ association is calling for zoning that will promote more intensive development, does it sound to you like they’re worried that this bill will spell the end to development? I don’t think so. No one is suggesting that building can stop.

Finally, the member from York North went on to suggest to this House that the result of this legislation might be that everyone but the rich will be living in towers of 20 and 40 and 50 storeys. There are a lot of housing options between 50-foot frontage and the 50th storey. If the effect of this legislation is that we have more townhomes, more condominiums, more multi-residential apartment buildings that don’t have to be 50 storeys high, that will be a good thing. That would signal a change of direction in the way this city is developing, and I would argue that change is long overdue.

As it happens, I have 50 years’ experience of the corridor between Toronto and Newmarket. When I grew

up in Richmond Hill, between 1953 and 1971, we were in a small town. It was a town of 16,000 people. My dad practised medicine. We went to Newmarket when he did his rounds at the hospital. We came to visit my grandparents at York Mills and Bayview. There were a lot of cows for the four kids in the back of the car to count on those Saturday and Sunday drives.

That has completely changed. The land between Toronto and Newmarket is unrecognizable compared to 50, 40 and 35 years ago. I'm not looking at that through rose-coloured glasses; I'm not taking a romantic view of this. The fact is we cannot afford to continue that style of development. I agree with my colleague from Oakville that that pattern of development was not adopted maliciously. I agree with him that the people who built this region, and who continue to build this region, do important work.

We have to ensure that the GTA is home to a development climate that allows our developers to continue to build affordable housing and strong communities in the region as it grows. But we also know that we do not have an infinite amount of land to play with. We know that if the GTA eats up a further 1,000 square kilometres of prime farmland, that's land we will not have to grow the food we need.

These observations lead to one conclusion, which the previous government was not willing to reach: We have to develop a denser, more efficient pattern of development across the GTA. I share the hope of the Greater Toronto Home Builders' Association that as our government moves to protect the land surrounding the GTA, we will also show the leadership needed to promote a denser approach to development.

Denser communities require less public infrastructure investment per capita. They're more easily serviced by comparatively cost-effective and ecologically friendly public transit. By reducing dependence on the automobile, they're an important weapon against gridlock. If they include smaller average dwelling sizes, that's a good thing too; they benefit the environment by reducing pollution.

1730

I believe we don't have any choice in this. Changing the way we understand our relationship to the land is not something we have an option about. We have to do it. I believe this legislation is a step in the right direction toward that. Ultimately, the culture change that tells us we need to reduce our ecological footprint, that we need to use fewer resources, not more, that doing so will bring economic as well as ecological benefits, is a culture change we must make. Providing the leadership needed to move to that culture in which we ask whether we can achieve our goals using further resources rather than where we can find additional resources is among the greater services this government can provide to the citizens of Ontario. I support this bill as part of that culture change.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I want to congratulate the member for the fine rendition of the legislation. I totally agree with the premise that we need to do all we can to protect the farmland and the undeveloped part of the province for the purpose for which it was originally intended, rather than to keep building out—the urban sprawl, so to speak. But I do have a little problem with the analysis that we should support this bill and that it will do what it's supposed to do because the Toronto home builders are in favour of this bill. I just want to point out that there's a bit of a vested interest on behalf of the Toronto home builders. Obviously, as soon as we decide that we're not going to allow people to build anywhere else, everything that the Toronto home builders have now in their ownership will become much more valuable, so of course they see this as a wonderful bill.

The people who are involved in the area that the greenbelt is going to apply to are not nearly as pleased with this legislation. They have trouble getting any revenue from this land that we're talking about. The government does not do enough to look after the farmers. The farmers are saying, "There are other things we could do with this land that will serve the people and will make it much more valuable to us." But here we have a government saying, "No, we're not going to let those local decisions stand any more. We are going to tell the local people what they're going to do with the land in order to increase the value of the building area in the greater Toronto area so they won't go into the rural parts."

I think this bill would only serve the people of the province well if the government would come forward and help the farmers stay on the land and make that a profitable venture, as opposed to restricting development anywhere else. I would encourage the government to do that.

Mr Bisson: I want to take a bit of a different approach and commend the comments from the member for Don Valley West, because most of what she said, I can agree with. My only point is that I wish it was in the legislation.

I agree with her in all of her assertions that we need to look at ways, when it comes to municipal planning, to do infilling, as I call it, so that we don't encourage urban sprawl. It's much more efficient to make sure our cities work by providing good, basic services so that cities are able to work and function in a way that makes some sense, and not to encourage urban sprawl. I'm with her on all that.

My problem is, as I read the legislation, the bill basically does two things. "The purpose of the bill"—and I'm reading out of the explanatory notes in the bill—"is to establish a greenbelt study area.... The power of municipalities in respect of land use planning matters is restricted in relation to land in the greenbelt study area that is outside an urban settlement area.... Similarly, no applications may be made in respect of these matters and all applications, referrals, hearings, appeals and pro-

cedures before a joint board under the Consolidated Hearings Act or the Ontario Municipal Board with respect to these matters are stayed." So this is all about giving the minister some power to not allow municipalities to do development on those sensitive areas.

The problem is, we don't have a good Planning Act by which to do that. We had a Planning Act that was amended back in 1991 by then-Minister Dave Cooke, who undertook a very long consultative process with municipalities and other partners in order to develop a Planning Act. The Tories got elected, took the Planning Act, which did all those things that the member from Don Valley West says should be in the Planning Act, and threw them out the window.

This bill doesn't put them back in. What it does is buy you some time. Let's not say this is far-sweeping legislation. Those are the comments that my good friend from Don Valley West made, that these are far-sweeping changes being made in legislation. All this does is give a stay so that the government can go away and hopefully revive good planning in this province, something the Tories did away with and something we'll support you on if you decide to do that.

Mrs Van Bommel: I'd like to address again the whole issue of the purpose of the greenbelt legislation. It is intended to buy the time that we need to look at the process of better planning. We want to develop good planning for the greenbelt area.

I'd like to also address the issue that the member for Don Valley West brought up in terms of intensification. In this country, we've become accustomed to the idea that we have a lot of land. We're in Canada and we see ourselves as having lots of land. It doesn't take us long to see, when we go outside our urban areas, that we have that. What we don't quite understand is the fact that we don't have a lot of good agricultural land. We need to look at other jurisdictions such as Europe to see how they have handled that issue of intensification and increasing the densities of their population.

As I said in my earlier address when I spoke to this bill, only 5% of Canada has good agricultural land. That's 5% of an entire country the size of Canada. Of that, half of it is in Ontario, and that still only comprises 12% of the land base we have here. A lot of the very unique soils are in the Niagara area. We have the moderation that comes from the lakes and the Niagara Escarpment that allow us to grow products there that we can't grow anywhere else in Ontario.

I think it's important that we have legislation that sets out boundaries and allows us to say that we will have some kind of co-existence between urban and rural areas and work together to preserve the land we need for food production. That's the important part here.

We've talked about how it's important to have product that's grown in Ontario. We believe that very much. As a producer of product, I want to make sure that people are consuming product and that they know what's in their product when they buy it. That's why I feel it's important to do this.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I'm pleased to add some comments to the debate on Bill 27, an Act to establish a greenbelt study area, and the speech made by the member from Don Valley West. I have to agree with some of the comments she was making with regard to the need for denser development, as was also supported by the member from Timmins-James Bay, talking about infilling.

I believe that here in North America, in Canada and Ontario, we need to look more to the European model of development, where we have cities designed for people, where we have more thought for walking, for pathways, for bikeways, where we're concerned with aesthetics in development, where we protect the environment and where we protect farmland. I certainly think that's very important.

In a province the size of Ontario, we also need to realize that 80% of the land mass is northern Ontario, and there the problem we have is a declining population. We have problems with youth leaving communities. So we can't forget the north. We have to remember to build the important infrastructure. That's why I'm glad that this week the government has finally confirmed that there won't be tolls on Highway 69. This is basic infrastructure, necessary to see economic development in the north. And finally, today, we've had confirmation that there won't be tolls on Highway 11 either as it's four-laned to the north.

I think we need to realize that these are basic infrastructures for the north. We have to remember the north as we look to our ever-expanding population here in Ontario and do things to make it possible to succeed and see real economic development and prosperity occurring in the north.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Thornhill has two minutes to reply.

Mr Racco: I want to thank the members from Don Valley West, Oxford, Timmins-James Bay, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and Parry Sound-Muskoka for their comments.

I think it's important to note that a mix of housing types must be available in the market so that anyone can buy the type of housing they choose. At the same time, I think all of us tend to agree that a denser area is better for everybody, not only because it would allow more land to be left available for farming, but also because it's going to make our cities, our municipalities more economic and more efficient, and of course they will require less infrastructure because less land needs to receive that infrastructure. All those things will be taken into consideration during the discussion, if Bill 27 is finalized. The study will look into those areas and will be able to provide what the community has been asking for; that is, more efficient development.

1740

Some people made reference to housing. In other cities, such as in Europe, where if you go to many cities—for instance, I just came back from Israel, where you look at four-, five- and six-floor housing. You can

walk to the local store, work in the community and feel comfortable that there are people on the street. There are facilities in the community. You don't need an automobile; you can walk or ride a bike, and you feel comfortable doing that. It's that type of housing that municipalities have been looking to provide, and I believe Bill 27 will allow for that possibility.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Hudak: I'm pleased to rise on Bill 27 to comment a bit on what I've heard in this debate in the chamber to date and, I think very importantly, to give some perspective from the Niagara Peninsula, particularly the riding of Erie-Lincoln, which I am privileged and proud to represent.

As a first blush on the most recent comments, just because something happens in Europe, do we have to adopt it in Canada? There are a lot of things that happen in Europe that I certainly would not want to adopt as part of Canada. We have our own separate culture and history. Just because something is happening in Spain or France or the UK doesn't mean it's good for Canada, for Toronto, for the Niagara Peninsula. Why can't we make our own policy decisions?

I think the culture here in Ontario, while similar in some ways, is substantially different from what you're going to get in Barcelona or Paris or London, England. Therefore, I think that taking a cookie-cutter approach to those countries and applying it here is short-sighted and a fundamental misunderstanding of Canadian culture and history.

I think there's an alarming naïveté in this intensification debate that if we set up this greenbelt as a moat, then all of a sudden people will be able to find homes in the brownfield areas in the city of Toronto. First of all, the city of Toronto has a lot of strong attributes, but there are a lot of people in Erie-Lincoln and Waterloo-Wellington who prefer the attributes of those communities. There may be people who don't want to live in an intensified development in downtown Toronto and who prefer, even if they work in Toronto, to have more space to raise their families. They prefer having a backyard for their son or daughter and don't want to live in a heavily developed area or on the 30th or 40th floor of a condominium. It fits some people's choices and a lot of people do live that way, but there are a lot who do not want to adopt that lifestyle and prefer to live in the GTA surrounding areas or in Erie-Lincoln.

In fact, the Urban Development Institute estimates that if you developed all the brownfields, if you intensified to a maximum, it could only take up a maximum of 30% of projected growth in the central Ontario region. So I'm worried that this is being offered as some sort of panacea where all the development is going to occur, because I think it's a false assumption. I don't think it reflects the values of a lot of Ontario taxpayers, nor, if 100% of them chose to live there, could they all be accommodated—by no means. Less than a third of them could, at maximum.

By way of example, take the old Greenwood Racetrack facility, which is one of those brownfields we

speaking about. A popular site in the heyday of horse racing in the province of Ontario, it closed some years ago and is now being developed. The average price of a home in that brownfield area, where we could all live if we set up this greenbelt, is between \$800,000 and \$1 million. Now, there are people who, by their own wealth, their skills and how they're rewarded in the marketplace can afford that, but the vast majority of Ontarians would never dream of living in an \$800,000 or \$1-million home.

The notion that new immigrants who are coming to Canada to make good, to earn a good income, provide for their families that want to live in the Toronto area—you're not going to cram them into an \$800,000 to a \$1-million property area, brownfield development. New families who are starting out, moving away from their parents' home, looking for a place to live close to work—the notion that you can cram them all into areas of this nature, I think, speaks of the naïveté of this panacea of brownfield development. Sure, it'll help in some senses, but it ain't the whole loaf, or anything close to it.

There are people, by their nature, who are going to want to drive to work, to have larger spaces to raise their families, and one major omission of this piece of legislation is a supporting transportation strategy. Sure enough, if you set aside these areas where no development can take place, no home building can take place, people are going to want to look for some place to live. The notion that the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has used on a couple of occasions, that we put a freeze into place—what we've called a time out, so to speak—you may have called time out on the land under the minister's zoning order of December 15 or whatever it was, but the market continues; the demand for homes continues; new people moving into the greater Toronto area continues. The housing market continues. New jobs, hopefully, will continue to grow in the province of Ontario. So the market continues to function, but it has been jammed up in certain areas, resulting in significant price spikes for vacant land in the affected areas, and I think it will expand out beyond the greenbelt into places like Kitchener, Waterloo, Guelph and Barrie.

If you do the greenbelt legislation, if it passes—and it sounds like most of the government members are voting in support of it, so it will likely become law—what is that transportation strategy to help address the needs of people who are living on the other side of the greenbelt to get to work, to facilitate their drive to the office, to the workplace? By way of example, in Niagara Peninsula, there's been an outcry. While it's not universally supported, I've got to tell you, 70% or 80% of the people, I would wager, support the mid-peninsula corridor, a new highway through southern and western Niagara.

If you want to take some of the pressure off the QEW corridor through the tender fruit lands, as this bill purports to do, it's the highway. You need to build that parallel route that would start just somewhere just after the Peace Bridge through Fort Erie, go through southern and western Niagara, then link up into another major highway, whatever the government chooses, whether it's

407 or 403 or 401 or QEW or what have you; nonetheless, the point being that we need to have that transportation support, which will then take the pressure off of the tender fruit lands.

If you want the greenbelt strategy to be a success, you're going to need the mid-peninsula corridor as a transportation—you can't just build a greenbelt as a moat. You're going to need these transportation routes through the greenbelt to make sure people and goods can get back and forth to markets, to support our economy in the province of Ontario.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: I said that it's not universally supported. We had Liberals who said they were against the highway. You had Liberals, like my opponent Vance Badawey, who said they're going to build a highway immediately, but what have we heard from the Minister of Transportation today? Absolutely not one word on progress on the mid-peninsula corridor, an essential element of the successful preservation of green space area. Any kind of strategy has to have the highway.

I know I'm belabouring this point, but I want to put that on the floor that I suggested, if members truly believe in the greenbelt, if they truly believe in maintaining green space in the Niagara Peninsula particularly, they need to support the mid-peninsula corridor at once. What we've seen is gridlock in decision-making. In fact, we have seen this government slam the brakes on the mid-peninsula corridor and then put it into reverse.

The next point I want to bring up is with respect to supporting municipalities. I represent several municipalities that will be impacted by this legislation, or just outside of my riding. Municipalities that will be mandated by the province from time to time to bring forward new programs are mandated by their citizens to expand government services.

1750

One issue that we're looking at recently in Niagara, for example, is the transportation system. Taxpayers rightly will be concerned if they see their tax rates increasing from the municipal council, so they look to expand their tax assessment base. They look to have more homes built, more businesses and more commercial development in their area so they will have the revenue coming into support important municipal services, or just to fix up the roads and sewers. So if you box them in, if you say that there are no more development opportunities in these areas—and there may be some brownfields but it's not a panacea—what kind of compensation is there going to be for municipalities like Lincoln, Grimsby, Niagara-on-the-Lake or St Catharines when their development opportunities are effectively frozen in perpetuity? One option is—

Mr McMeekin: They're not dense enough.

Mr Hudak: The member says they're not dense enough. It's that kind of attitude that says that the province knows best and municipal councils cannot make

the right decisions. There's no doubt that this underlies the theme of this bill.

Mr McMeekin: We're defining the provincial interest in this bill.

Mr Hudak: However you describe it—you're defining the provincial interests or not—I think all members recognize that a substantial authority in making these types of decisions will rest with the Premier and the cabinet ministers of the executive council. It's very clear from this bill, as well as Bill 26. I don't think anybody can deny that. However you mask it, whatever description you use, surely you must agree that with Bill 26 and Bill 27, there is substantially more authority at the provincial level for deciding local planning. You can't argue with that. You may take issue, I say to the member, with some my comments, but you can't—

Mr McMeekin: You didn't do anything.

Mr Hudak: Now he says that we didn't do anything. I'm trying to provide some constructive criticism to assist you with this bill. If the bill passes, and it sounds like it may, with the number of votes you have across the floor—but if you truly believe—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Can I have order in the House? We've got nine minutes to go before I adjourn it.

Mr Hudak: If you truly believe in a greenbelt strategy, not only do you need the supporting transportation routes so that people and goods can get to market, not only do you have to recognize and move off the brownfields as a panacea that's going to solve all these issues, because, despite the minister calling a time out, markets continue to function and cause spikes in prices in a number of areas, and will cause job loss as well.

You need to help out the municipalities. One suggestion may be that if you're going to box in St Catharines, Lincoln or Grimsby, perhaps use the consolidated revenue fund to help compensate for that, because the province as a whole would benefit from increased green space. I think on aesthetic value, people will support the notion of maintaining green space, but if certain municipalities and the taxpayers of these municipalities are paying the price for that, whether they're seeing the prices of their homes going up or seeing municipalities forced to raise tax rates, I think it's a fair argument to say that the rest of the province as a whole should help contribute to those municipalities who are making the sacrifice on the development side. I got a half-nod across the floor, so I'm making progress on this.

So with respect to municipalities like those I have the honour of representing, I think, as well, you need some sort of framework to support municipalities, some incentives, whether they're financial, economic or something through the assessment system, to help them continue to grow and provide services, if you plan on boxing them in through a greenbelt process.

Another major concern is the impact of this legislation on the agricultural community. No doubt we all like the bucolic view of what the farm is and our opportunity to

drive to farms—especially if you live in urban areas—and enjoy the beauty. There's nothing quite like it, whether it's a farm or sitting on the deck of a winery down on the Niagara Peninsula on a nice autumn afternoon with a chardonnay in your hand enjoying the view. That's something that people from the city as well as locals enjoy doing. So if you want to preserve this view, this agricultural land, whether it's to support agriculture or whether it's for the aesthetic value of having the land in agriculture, you need to support the farmer. If you want to preserve the farm, you need to support the farmer. A major piece missing is what kind of agricultural support system the government has planned to help out the farmers.

Granted, I think there's a lot to be said for helping to preserve the tender fruit land in Niagara. This bill preserves all farmland in the designated area by the minister's zoning order, so whether it's actually something that's producing a high-priced grape, for example, or whether it's producing peaches or sour cherries, or whether it's land that's in oilseeds or in farm animals, it's all covered.

By way of example, and I used this a bit earlier, if a sour cherry farmer sees the price for his or her product plummet as a result of competition from overseas or perhaps a subsidy from the state of Washington or Michigan or other competitors, that farmer is going to say, "I have no financial wherewithal to continue farming," and will look to do something else with the property that he or she owns. There is no support system to try to keep that in farming as part of this legislation. How are you going to help out the sour cherry farmer? Are you going to allow them to sever off a piece of land? It doesn't look like it, and if they were, it would be at the desk of the Premier, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the rest of cabinet.

I think it's a good question for debate that some of my colleagues will return to, whether that's the best way of having local decision-making, whether larger political issues and the time frames associated with those decisions are going to catch up local decision-making in a prolonged process of debate at the cabinet table. No doubt for a small piece of land that could be decided locally rather expeditiously, a lot of other issues will come into play at the larger cabinet table, including large stakeholder groups that are going to lobby piece by piece of land and, I think, bog up the system in this decision-making.

Back to the farmers. There's one solution that would help out tremendously with the grape-growing community, which is an important aspect—it's certainly not the only aspect of agriculture in Niagara, but the member asked me for some suggestions in addition to the TRF I had talked about in transportation networks. I would say that Bill 7 before the Legislature today, the VQA store legislation, would be an excellent way of ensuring a new revenue source would come down to the wineries, to the grape growers, and to the associated farming and tourism community.

Mr McMeekin: Whose bill is that?

Mr Hudak: He asks whose bill it is. It's actually a bill from the member for Erie-Lincoln, who is speaking right now. He likes the bill, and I do hope I have enough support. Whether it's a private member's bill that makes it through third reading or whether the government adopts this as their own initiative, kudos to them. I would like to see this become reality. In fact, it was on the floor of the Legislature before the election. We did have support of the Liberals at that time for this bill.

The Ontario grape growers were here just last week and had promoted this concept and called upon the government to institute VQA wine stores in the province. To help explain that, these would be stores that would help showcase particularly our small craft wineries. Only Ontario VQA, 100% Ontario-grown grape product, would be on the shelves. I would suggest they start out in tourism areas and try to expand that market and increase sales, because not every winery can get all their products on to the shelves of the LCBO and, secondly, a winery can only sell its own product at its winery, so market access is limited, particularly for the small and medium-sized wineries. This would give them that needed market access. But again, that is just one suggestion, an important one that I hope does become reality, but one suggestion for one segment of the agricultural market, so what are the other assists, whether it's tender fruit or other types of agriculture in the peninsula or across the province? I think if you really want the greenbelt to be successful, you bring in the agricultural support system to make sure it pays to continue to farm, that you help preserve the farm by preserving the farmer, and you bring the important transportation networks into existence as well.

Secondly, what kind of flexibility will the legislation or the execution of this legislation allow municipalities for associated agricultural use? Not all of the land that's protected by this bill is going to be prime-A agricultural land. It's one vast swath in the treatment of this bill on agriculture, so what kind of associated uses will be allowed? I'm greatly concerned that they will be severely restricted or will have to go through a number of steps to get to the minister's office and to the cabinet table before they're approved.

By way of example, in Jordan, a farm operation that was set to go, a farm implement store to help support the agricultural community, to help them become more competitive, more productive, and keep the land in agriculture, has been effectively halted by this bill. Now, maybe the minister will entertain an exemption for this, but I would argue, is that the best process for this example to go through, where one by one there would be a ministerial exemption? Or, better yet, is it something that's best left in the hands of the municipality, where they could make a more prompt decision and probably one more reflective of local needs and values?

As well, in the property tax assessment system, what opportunities are there to give tax incentives to farmers if they bring in that associated industrial use? Wineries are

one example of that. Cherry-pitting operations that add preservatives or take the pits out of cherries, to sell up-market, is another example. I greatly fear that those opportunities for economic growth and expansion of the farming community will be inadvertently sidelined by this legislation.

In conclusion, while I think the voters and those watching at home in the riding of Erie-Lincoln appreciate the notion of keeping the green space around them green, they're going to demand that transportation networks are in place, that there are incentives in place to protect

farmers and keep the land in farming. They want to know that municipalities that are making the sacrifice by limiting their growth are going to have other opportunities to bring in revenue to support local services. There is a great deal of devil in the details that I have yet to hear appropriately addressed from across the floor.

The Acting Speaker: It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**First Session, 38th Parliament**Assemblée législative
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des débats
(Hansard)****Tuesday 6 April 2004****Mardi 6 avril 2004**Speaker
Honourable Alvin CurlingPrésident
L'honorable Alvin CurlingClerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 6 April 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 6 avril 2004e

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

COMMITMENT TO THE FUTURE OF MEDICARE ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR L'ENGAGEMENT D'ASSURER L'AVENIR DE L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 5, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 8, An Act to establish the Ontario Health Quality Council, to enact new legislation concerning health service accessibility and repeal the Health Care Accessibility Act, to provide for accountability in the health service sector, and to amend the Health Insurance Act / Projet de loi 8, Loi créant le Conseil ontarien de la qualité des services de santé, édictant une nouvelle loi relative à l'accessibilité aux services de santé et abrogeant la Loi sur l'accessibilité aux services de santé, prévoyant l'imputabilité du secteur des services de santé et modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Further debate on Bill 8? I recognize the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): The riding with the longest name, because their people have the biggest hopes and the biggest hearts and the biggest dreams.

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): Just as big as Hamilton's.

Mr McMeekin: As big as my beloved Hamilton's. That's true.

I'm pleased to be sharing my time with the earnest member from Prince Edward-Hastings, who will be speaking a little bit later.

I'm pleased to rise and offer some passing comment on Bill 8. I want to, just by way of preface, indicate that health care has been an issue in our family for a long time. My good spouse is an active family physician who has been in a primary care health service organization for some 25 years, and it's a great system. But that having been said, there's so much about the health care system that's broken. I've discovered, as a member of the Hamilton District Health Council and when I was on regional council as chair of the region's community

service public health committee, there's much about the health care system that needs fixing. Sadly, when it comes to health, I think there's a history that when all is said and done, there's often more said than done. I think Bill 8 goes a considerable way in addressing that, and for that, I and my constituents are very, very thankful.

As I have had the privilege of serving the good people of ADFA, there has been a plethora of people coming in to see me about various health care issues. It's clear that our drug benefit plan in Ontario is in need of a radical re-examination. The audiology services that were delisted was a serious issue. Dr Morreale in my riding has come in to talk about oral hygiene in long-term-care facilities. You know, there's legislation that requires that anyone going into a long-term-care facility have a complete oral exam. It's simply not happening in Ontario.

Diabetes is an epidemic in need of a strategy, and I commend the minister. I know there's a group of deputy ministers who are working very hard on this as we speak. There are advances in Alzheimer's disease and the strategy there and some of the issues, and elder abuse, which continues to be a major concern. There are all kinds of new ways we could come at that. The addictions community laments the fact that funding has been frozen for some 10 years in that area. The need for multi-disciplinary, community-based health teams, primary care reform, is urgent. The development of a continuum of home care is so important as well. You know, to have somebody spend the day in the hospital costs about \$812. Long-term care is \$117. A day of home care is \$44. Most seniors and others who are faced with difficult decisions want to stay in their home. The Honourable Roy Romanow has done a review of this, as we know, and he recommended that home care be integrated into the health care basket.

I mention these issues in the next 50 or so seconds that I have because we're not going to be able to get at dealing with these until we can build into the system the kind of accountability and the kind of respectability for health that is buried in Bill 8. We have to make health care more responsive to patients and more accountable to taxpayers. Over the last few years health care has been rising yearly at 8% and hospitals at more than 10%, and we're simply not getting the results we need and deserve from our investment. That's why we told hospitals that there are going to be some strings attached to their funding and that's why we're so eager to work at new performance agreements, but that's only going to happen when we have the legislative framework in place.

That's what Bill 8 is all about. That's why I'm so pleased to stand in my place today and speak out strongly in favour of Bill 8, the government's initiative.

1850

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I'm also pleased to speak to this bill. I don't believe there is any member in this House who ran as a one-issue candidate. There is certainly a diversity of reasons why we came together. Certainly, for me, the fundamental health care item was probably what led me to initially come forward.

I can recall a day when we didn't have OHIP in Ontario. I can recall a day when you could buy your way to the head of the line. One of my strongest memories growing up was when my mother contracted cancer when I was quite young. My recollection is of my father at the kitchen table at the end of each month trying to find the money to pay for the drugs, to pay for the treatment, to pay for the hospitalization, to pay the mortgage, to pay for groceries, to buy clothes for us kids. It is a memory that is instilled in me that should never be repeated.

Before this government was elected, I felt we were on the road to two-tier medicine. When my wife was young, she had an operation at Sick Kids, and they retained a copy of the Sick Kids bill to my in-laws for \$320, the best money they ever spent. I came across it some months ago. But what if they hadn't had \$320 to pay for that operation at that time? What if they hadn't?

The fundamental belief of Ontarians that we heard over and over is fully accessible public health care. I applaud the Minister of Health for bringing this forward. I think it reflects totally what our community has said. I understand there are some groups who have questions about it, but I'm also pleased that the minister is going to put it out for discussion and input again.

There certainly have been some questions that have come forward from hospital boards over the issue of the powers given to the minister. I would suggest that what the minister wants is what the people of Ontario want of their hospital boards, plain and simple. If you stop people on the street in any one of our communities, they're going to tell you that they want a nurse at their bedside or at their loved one's bedside. They want a lab technician to be available. They want the hallways to be clean. They want the snow to be shovelled. They want the building to be accessible. They want the money that comes from our government to the hospitals to be used for patient services.

Sometimes hospitals get hung up on the word "corporation." "Corporation" sometimes infers that it is a very select group that operates the hospitals. The reality is, the hospitals are owned by the people of Ontario. Their needs are very fundamental, very simple and very achievable. The people in our province want accountability for expenditures. No board that is accountable needs to fear anything. We're going to work with the boards. We want the boards, in their actions, to reflect the community and the provincial perspective on what should happen in our hospitals. It's as simple as that.

The community doesn't want the infusions of money going to hospitals to be used for management salary increases. They do not want them to be used for larger and larger administrations. Anyone on the street can tell you that. We know that. We know very clearly that in this province we need to focus on health care. It was at risk in this province; I really believe it was. I watched the privatization cloud looming over the hospitals in Ontario. I watched hospital closures. I watched hospital amalgamations take place without studies done that would support that.

The minister has put in place a process that will ensure that hospitals will follow not what the minister wants, because what the minister wants is what our community wants. I don't believe hospitals need to worry about this. I believe it is an assurance to the people of Ontario, who have had concerns at times, that the money is going toward patients. The health minister said, for example, that he would like to see 70% full-time nurses in hospitals. Not only does it make sense from the nurses' viewpoint, it makes sense from the patients' viewpoint, that they will get the same person providing care each and every day, rather than having to run through their problem to a new person each day.

Everything that appears in this bill is focused on providing better patient care. Maybe we can't do things the way we've always done them at hospital boards. Maybe hospital boards need to be more accountable to the community. Maybe, rather than the case of some that are fairly selective in their membership, they need to be opened up and give all the hospital members an opportunity to serve on the board, because if hospital boards are composed of people who represent the community, they will represent the community.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I want to respond essentially to the member for, I think, Quinte something or other.

Mr Parsons: Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr Runciman: Prince Edward-Hastings. I appreciated his comments with respect to the concern about the future of health care not just in Ontario but in Canada. I think he's perpetuating a myth with respect to the sustainability of the system the way it's currently structured, despite the recommendations of Romanow and the huge infusions of money that Romanow is suggesting and recommending, which the federal Liberal government has failed to follow through on.

At the end of the day, I'm of the belief that the system is not sustainable in the way it's currently financed by simply looking at the taxpayers of Canada to continue to support it. We're seeing provinces right across this country struggling in terms of their ability to keep up with health care costs.

We've seen recently in Nova Scotia where Premier Hamm has desperately pleaded for more federal money. Newfoundland, we know, is in dire straits, and we know that in Ontario 47% to 48% of our operating budget is now dedicated to health care. It's choking off all the

other important priorities of Ontarians. Whether it's education, public safety, the environment—whatever it might be—the government has made a decision, we read, to incur deficits for the next year or two to try to cope with these challenges.

What we have to do is find new and innovative ways, and we have to open our minds, if you will, to the involvement of the private sector in some areas of health care. If we don't do that, we're going to find it collapsing around our ears, and the provinces that are less able to sustain it, like Nova Scotia and so on, are going to be in very difficult straits in the near term.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Speaker, that was an impressive group of people you had here earlier today from your riding. I enjoyed the chance to meet with them; I'm sure you did. They appeared pleased and excited to be here at Queen's Park.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Is that the Speaker you're talking about?

Mr Kormos: Yes, the Speaker had some of the folks from his riding in the visitors' gallery, and he of course posed for the 8-by-10 glossy photo down on the steps of the Legislature. They seemed like really nice folks. As I say, it was a pleasure to meet them.

Marilyn Churley from Toronto-Danforth is going to be speaking to this bill in around 10 minutes' time, so I invite people who happen to be watching to stay tuned—

Ms Churley: Tune in.

Mr Kormos: Well, no, 10 more minutes and Marilyn Churley is going to give you the straight goods on this bill. This is a remarkable piece of crap, quite frankly, coming from this government. I've never been in committee hearings where not one—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Member, please take your seat. That language is objectionable to the Chair, and I would ask to you withdraw it.

Mr Kormos: OK, Speaker, I withdraw.

In any event, here we've got a bill that nobody supported. It stuck to my heel like something you pick up on the front lawn on a moist spring day. I've got to tell you, Shelley Martel was sitting in committee day after day, waiting patiently. I joined her from time to time. Other caucus members joined her from time to time. Not one presenter, not one participant in the hearings endorsed the bill.

This government couldn't even find some old, worn-out Liberal hack to show up for a couple of drinks afterward and half a stale cheese tray to even feign support for the legislation. Trust me, that's been done from time to time. Over 15 or 16 years, I've watched that sort of thing going on. They couldn't even come up with an impostor. They couldn't even come up with somebody who would feign support for the legislation.

The bill is not going to be supported by New Democrats. The bill has got to be defeated, and Marilyn Churley is going to tell you why.

1900

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): In my brief two minutes, I want to reiterate the comments made by the two speakers who spoke earlier on this issue.

I just want to relate to you a very small story in the minute and 45 seconds I have. When I knocked on doors during the election, during the month of September, people at the door didn't want to really hear about mortgage deductibility. They didn't want to hear about the seniors' tax credit. In fact, they didn't even want to hear about making the electrical system public. They wanted to hear about basically two things: health care and education. That's what they wanted to hear about. This bill addresses one of those two major concerns.

I went to one house, and it almost brought me to tears when an elderly gentleman, about 70 years old, came to the door and said, "Who is going to bathe my brother? There's one bath a week. He's not being bathed properly. No one is providing proper bathing. The nurse who should be giving baths is sick."

We have a system that's broken, and it needs to be fixed. This bill, along with other legislation the Minister of Health and this government is bringing forward, is here to address those concerns and to help people in Ontario have a better health care system, a better education system and a better province for everybody. Without any doubt, Bill 8 is supportable. I stand firmly behind it and know it will be something good for Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: We have time for one further question or comment. I recognize the member for Nepean-Carleton.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Thank you very much, Speaker. That's a fancy tie you're wearing.

I remind people watching on television that Bob Runciman, the member for Leeds-Grenville, will be up next, so don't adjust your set. Following Bob will be the good member for Toronto-Danforth. She will be up to tell you why this bill is terrible.

I, like many an Ontarian throughout the province, am shocked that the member from Belleville did not mention the ethical scandal and the cover-up going on at Queen's Park. Cover-up, cover-up; there's a big cover-up going on at Queen's Park. I'm surprised that with respect to Bill 8 he wouldn't want to talk about the cover-up—cover-up, cover-up—and the ethical limbo dance—

The Acting Speaker: Would the member please take his seat? I need to confer.

The Speaker has ruled the terminology the member is using out of order. I would ask him to cease and desist from using that terminology.

Mr Baird: I have a Speaker Stockwell ruling that "cover-up" is in order. Speaker, could I get the clock readjusted for the time you took off?

I'm shocked that the member didn't talk about the orchestrated—

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): On a point of order, Speaker: You just made a ruling and he said to you that the member beside him has told him your ruling was not correct. I think that's out of order. He just said that.

Mr Runciman: No, he didn't.

Mr Patten: He did so.

The Acting Speaker: I asked the member to withdraw. I heard him say he apologized. He made reference to the comment again. I would ask the member once again to use temperate language in this House. I'll give him a few extra seconds to conclude.

Mr Baird: If you check the videotape, you didn't ask me to withdraw and I didn't offer a withdrawal. You asked me to temper my rhetoric.

If the unethical conduct of some causes concern to members of this House, I would be trying to change the subject as well.

We will not sit back and watch you take over the Queensway-Carleton Hospital board—

The Acting Speaker: Would the member please take his seat? I would caution the member once again to respect the Chair.

There are now two minutes to respond on the part of the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot.

Mr McMeekin: I want to thank the member from Leeds-Grenville, the member from Niagara Centre, the member from Scarborough Southwest and Nepean-Carleton, although I wasn't quite sure where the last member was going.

Interjection.

Mr McMeekin: I'm more concerned about attention deficit disorder. If these people had paid more attention to the deficit, we wouldn't have so much disorder in our health care system.

This government is out to build a stronger, more progressive and accountable health care system. We want to work with our partners in the health care system and at the senior level of government, and we've been doing that. There has been some \$700 million in additional federal funding come into Ontario since this government was elected and another \$2 billion was announced just a couple weeks ago, with more to come once we get the accountability mechanisms in place. That's what this government is doing.

Without the kind of change that will be brought about by Bill 8, the medicare system as we know it won't survive; it will perish. That's why the establishment of the health quality council is so important. As we went all around this province in our round table sessions, 90% of the people we spoke to said waiting times had to be cut; 86% said they wanted to have quick access to a family doctor and primary care reform was essential. That's only going to happen when we can identify the resources, and we're only going to do that by making it clear to health care providers in the entire system that we're serious about maintaining the medicare system that has been so great in this country.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate on Bill 8?

Mr Runciman: It's always difficult to stand in your place after the member from Nepean-Carleton has entertained us and done his usual outstanding job of defending

the interests of not just the people of his own riding but the people of Ontario.

Mr Baird: I just give them the truth.

Interjections.

Mr Runciman: Anyway, moving right along, I want to compliment our critic for the health and long-term-care sector, Elizabeth Witmer, a former Minister of Health and a much-respected minister during her tenure in the ministry. I think there is a longed-for return of Ms Witmer to that ministry at the current time, given Bill 8 and other proclamations flowing from the current minister and the approach the current government has taken to health care, a take-it-or-leave-it approach. It's certainly not the opportunity that should be taken here, to work well with the health care sector partners, given the difficult circumstances that not just Ontario but every province and territory in this country faces with respect to the cost of health care and the challenges of health care. We're reading about that every day.

Earlier in one of my two-minute responses I mentioned reading recently Premier Hamm's desperate call—and I think it's fair to describe it as a desperate call—for additional assistance from the federal government with respect to meeting the needs under the current Canada Health Act and the restrictions that the act places on the provinces and territories across this country.

I recall Premier Harris talking to us a number of years ago when we were looking at further significant investments in health care, indicating that at some point Canada was going to hit the wall and it would be the provinces in this country that were less fortunate in terms of their economies that were going to hit it before Ontario and Alberta did. That's clear. We're starting to see the impact of that right now, whether it's in Nova Scotia—

Mr Baird: We already have a Tory from his riding.

Mr Runciman: You want to move over there, John?

—Newfoundland and New Brunswick as well. We are hearing it from every province.

The current Minister of Finance, Mr Sorbara, was the only Minister of Finance in Canada who was somewhat complimentary to the recent federal budget. What the reasons for that are, I'm not sure. But certainly every other Minister of Finance across this country recognized the shortcomings of the federal budget, especially in the area of health care.

1910

To think that Bill 8 and the intrusion into the independence of the hospital sector in this province are going to do anything meaningful to lessen the challenges we face is just kidding ourselves. It's not going to have a meaningful impact. What it's doing, really, is essentially upsetting communities across this province, the people who volunteer their time to serve on the boards of governors of a variety of hospitals across the province—no more, no less.

I want to say we are pleased that the government is following the advice of Ms Witmer and has consented now to have public hearings following second reading.

We support that and commend Ms Witmer for her efforts in making that possible.

I'm not speaking on behalf of my party. This is not an official party position, but I think we have to look beyond the boundaries in terms of finding solutions to the health care challenges we face in this country. That does mean involving the private sector to some degree. How that is structured I'm not sure, but I think we're going to be faced with rationing. We are going to be faced with a whole range of challenges when more and more of our budgets are eaten up by health care. Right now in Ontario, as I mentioned earlier, it is 47% or 48% of the operating budget. What happens when that gets to 55% or 60% of the operating budget? What does that mean to the Ministry of Community and Social Services? What does it mean to the Ministry of Education? What does it mean to colleges and universities? What does it mean to public safety? What does it mean to environment when more and more of that budget is being eaten up by the health care monster?

We have grown in the last 30 years with this myth that Ontarians, Canadians, are entitled to so-called free access to health care, whatever our demands might be. If it means going to an emergency centre for a hangnail or whatever it might be—a minor ailment—we've grown accustomed to that; it's our right as Canadians to be able to do that. There is a major effort that is going to have to be undertaken here to re-educate Canadians and Ontarians that that is not our right. We have to look at maintaining essential catastrophic services paid for by provincial and federal taxpayers, but in other services we should be looking at the reintroduction of some form of insurance program and ensuring that the people who are at the lower end of income levels are protected by us as taxpayers.

Certainly there are going to be scaremongers, and we're going to hear a lot of that. It is always the case. But at some point I have accepted the fact that we're going to have to hit the wall. That's what's going to have to happen before this kind of scaremongering rhetoric ceases and we come up with realistic solutions to the health care challenges.

Interjection.

Mr Baird: Roy Romanow is the Darth Vader of health care.

Mr Runciman: We hear the kinds of interruptions here tonight that have become symptomatic of this new Liberal government. They talk about a democratic deficit and ensuring that committees in this place have a meaningful role. We saw that was a joke when we approached government agencies to review the Ontario Securities Commission and when we approached general government to talk about taking Mr Sorbara up on his offer to appear with respect to the Royal Group Technologies scandal. We've seen that when we've raised questions in this House on a daily basis and not received one answer.

On that basis, regrettably, I have to move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Runciman has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1915 to 1945.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Runciman has moved the adjournment of the debate.

Would all those in favour of the motion please rise and remain standing.

Would those opposed to the motion please rise and remain standing to be counted.

Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller): The ayes are 7; the nays are 33.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

I now return to the member for Leeds-Grenville, who has the floor.

Mr Runciman: I just want to mention that I've heard certainly in my riding, as I'm sure members throughout the House have, from concerned organizations, whether it's CUPE or hospital boards, very serious concerns with respect to Bill 8, primarily about undermining the role and accountability of local volunteer boards with hospitals.

Another matter of concern in my area specifically are provisions in the legislation that may also prohibit payment of physicians to whom hospitals make direct payments for scarce expertise, which could lead to a decline in access to much-needed services. Certainly that's the case with the Brockville General, where we make direct payments to several specialties and also direct payments to ensure emergency room coverage.

I'm not sure the Liberal members of the House are really interested in the concerns expressed by Ontarians throughout this province with respect to Bill 8. We've seen this on so many occasions, whether it's Bill 8, whether it's the democratic deficit, whether it's the Sorbara scandal: continuing to refuse to answer questions in this House, continuing to refuse to give individual MPPs a role and a voice in this place, to give committees a role and a voice in this place.

On the basis of the reaction of the Liberal government, not just with Bill 8 but with all of their agenda, their shutting down of the opposition and giving us a meaningful role in this place, let alone their own backbenchers, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Runciman has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1949 to 2019.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted.

Deputy Clerk: The ayes are 7; the nays are 33.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

I believe the member for Leeds-Grenville still has the floor and has a couple of seconds left.

Mr Runciman: Just a few seconds to reiterate our concerns about Bill 8 and our frustration, as the member from Durham region prompts me, and again to congratulate our critic Elizabeth Witmer, a former Minister of Health, for pressuring the government into making a concession to have further public hearings following second reading.

The Acting Speaker: It's now time for questions and comments.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I've got to say I agree with some of the comments made by the member for Leeds-Grenville. There's some stuff in his speech that I agree with, because the reality is that what we're seeing in regard to Bill 8 is a little bit of Tory policy being re-enacted.

Remember the Conservatives when they were in power? You guys decided that you were going to centralize education decisions within the minister's office. The Minister of Education would make more and more decisions on a day-to-day basis about what school boards had to do in Ontario. Conservative policy was to centralize decision-making in education to the Minister of Education.

This legislation, Bill 8, is about the same thing. This is about a Minister of Health centralizing decision-making from elected, volunteer hospital boards, basically usurping their powers, so that the Minister of Health is able to say, for example, to the James Bay General Hospital in Moosonee or the Timmins and District Hospital in Timmins or any other hospital in this province, in Welland or Toronto or wherever it might be, that he knows best, that at the end of the day the Minister of Health should decide what is good for a community. If the Minister of Health decides, for example, that dialysis services in the community should be centralized in a regional area and that's not really what the hospital board wants to do, he wants the ability to do this.

So this is nothing more than a power grab on the part of the minister, and I'm saying that is not a good idea. We need to make sure that we give our hospital boards—they're elected people, they're volunteers, they work hard on behalf of their hospital boards in the communities they represent—the power to make the kinds of decisions that need to be made within communities so that hospitals are able to function in the way they were intended, and that is as community hospitals.

I recognize, on one hand, that we now fund them as a provincial government to the tune of more than 80%. But at the end of the day, we need to recognize that hospital

boards serve a useful purpose and we should give them the support they deserve.

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I want to address a couple of the comments made by the member from Leeds-Grenville.

One of the things that were said was that Bill 8 won't make any meaningful change. I think that is really off base in terms of what I heard when I went out on the committee hearings. It's quite clear that Bill 8 is going to be an agent of change. It's quite clear that what we heard was that the health care sector is looking for and is happy about accountability agreements being negotiated between the government and the health care institutions.

The other comment that the member from Leeds-Grenville made was about the runaway cost of health care. It's exactly that problem that Bill 8 is being put in place to deal with. The negotiation that's going to go on between the ministry and the boards of health care institutions is where that change is going to happen. The accountability agreements are going to put in place a new understanding of where health dollars should be going, what the standards are that we, as a community, agree on.

When the bill first went out, there was no talk of negotiation. We listened to the community. They asked for negotiation to be part of what happened—the way the accountability agreements were to be put in place—and that language is now in the bill. That's the second point I wanted to make, which is that the consultation on this bill has been very thorough and extensive. I think it's to our credit that we have agreed that after second reading we'll go back to the committee and have that conversation again with the amended bill.

So I'm happy to support this bill, and I hope that the member for Leeds-Grenville—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much for your comments.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): Very clearly, the member for Leeds-Grenville really hit the nail on the head when he asked all in this House and people in the province of Ontario to consider the source of our health care problems overall, that source being the federal Liberals in Ottawa.

As we all know, the present federal government funds about 16% of health care in Ontario and leaves the provincial taxpayers to fund the remaining 84%. Now think of the impact that has, as the member for Leeds-Grenville asked us to consider, on provinces like Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, which can ill afford the dollars to direct toward health care that we can in the rich province of Ontario.

This 16 to 84 ratio is a far cry from the 50 to 50 ratio that was negotiated at the inception of medicare. An arrangement was negotiated on the watch of people like John Robarts and John Diefenbaker, leaders who were able to come up with a fair and equitable arrangement to fund health care. Under the eight and a half of years of the Mike Harris and Ernie Eves government, we operated under a 16 to 84 ratio, a 14 to 86 ratio, where health care spending provincially rose from \$17.4 billion in 1995 to

\$28 billion a year, at a time when the federal Liberals, during that eight and a half years, continued to cut health care. The only ones who cut health care during the eight years were federal Liberals.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Churley: I've been listening with interest to this debate, because it's been a long haul to get us here in the House. I know there were a lot of committee hearings. What I find extremely interesting, listening to some of the Liberal members talk about the amendments, is that they listened and amendments were made to correct the problems, and that—I'm going to let 'er rip here—everybody is happy. Well, everybody is not happy. Nobody is happy with this bill.

The OHA wrote a letter—we're all familiar with it—to Minister Smitherman on March 17 that said as follows:

"While progress has been made, the amendments made on March 9 have not yet corrected what hospitals see as the most serious aspects of the bill. We believe further changes need to be made to sufficiently safeguard the critical role of community governance of hospitals. The central problem with Bill 8 is that it gives the provincial government the power to impose anything that it likes on any individual hospital, bypassing local boards—the people who know most about the hospital and the services it provides to the community."

There you have it. Even the amendments have not corrected the central problem, and I'm sure you're all hearing this. If you really believed, if you really wanted the accountability agreements, which nobody is disagreeing with—every group that came forward, it's my understanding, agreed with that—if you were truly serious about this, you would want to negotiate them rather than impose them. You could set up a dispute resolution mechanism. That would allow a third party to make the final decision, not the minister. The way this bill is written now, it's a carbon copy; in fact, even worse than previous Tory draconian legislation. This is unreal.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Come on, Marilyn.

Ms Churley: It's true. They're worse than you. So this has to be withdrawn.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Leeds-Grenville has two minutes to reply.

Mr Runciman: I appreciate the interventions of everyone. I do want to take this opportunity, though, to explain to those Ontarians who may be viewing the proceedings and are curious about why the Conservative Party is moving adjournment of the debate and adjournment of the House.

2030

This is really—I want to respect the Chair's ruling regarding language, so I'll use different language. Our concerns surround this cloak of secrecy that the government has dropped around the Sorbara scandal and Royal Group Technologies.

That's been made evident by their activities in this House on a regular basis by refusal to answer questions in question period dealing with that matter, the refusal of government members on the government agencies com-

mittee to allow a review of the Ontario Securities Commission, the refusal of the Liberal government members on the general government committee to allow Mr Sorbara to appear before the committee to explain his activities while he was a director and chair of the audit committee with Royal Group Technologies.

This is an individual whose activities may well be part of the investigation by the Ontario Securities Commission, Revenue Canada and the RCMP criminal investigation. This is the man who will be delivering the Ontario budget in a few short weeks.

Applause.

Mr Runciman: That should raise serious concerns, not applause, in the Liberal benches about what the impact could be on Ontario's economy if something negative flows out of these various investigations. This is a man who for 66 days refused to advise the Premier of the province about this investigation. That's a standard which should raise serious doubts among all members.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Churley: I know you're not surprised that some of my colleagues have spoken to this bill very forcefully. We do not support it and we think it should be withdrawn, it is so totally flawed. I'm surprised you're continuing with it, I really am. I have to tell you, this bill strikes fear in my heart, and I will tell you why just from a personal experience.

Back in 1988, when I was first elected to Toronto city council, it was then a Liberal government that decided—many of you weren't around here then—arbitrarily to close Women's College Hospital. As a city councillor who was supportive of keeping Women's College Hospital downtown, I was placed on that board, and together with Marilou McPhedran, whom we hired as a lawyer, and other community board members who wanted to save the hospital, we took over that board and, working with the community and the city of Toronto, were able to do the right thing and save the hospital from closing down. The minister, quite rightly, did not have the power to step in and sweep us aside and say, "We'll do what we want to do for economic reasons or whatever." I believe that's why the Peterson government was doing it at that time. But they caved. We won and the hospital was kept open.

It was very important to us to have the opportunity to get on the board. Yes, there was even a bit of a coup. The community did not want the hospital closed down, and the community, because it's a community hospital, decided to get together. Thousands of people came out in support of saving that hospital, and we were successful.

Of course the sad part of that story is that we saved it and the Tory government decided to move a lot of the services out to Sunnybrook with a lot of promises of services being kept in the downtown hospital. Some of them are still there, but I'm hearing things that are quite alarming in terms of many of the services that were promised at the time not coming through. But that's an issue for another day.

My point here is that we, as a community, had the ability and opportunity to save our hospital. And a darned good thing it was too that we saved it, because that was and continues to be a very important community hospital to the downtown core and beyond for women and families.

This bill really does give draconian powers to the minister to take over control of local hospital boards, boards at CCACs and boards of community health centres. I have a great community health centre in my riding of Toronto-Danforth, called the South Riverdale Community Health Centre. I worked there many years ago, and it's still a place I admire very much and its service to the community. The people on that board are voted in by the community and they work on behalf of the community, and also administrators at our long-term-care facilities. It allows the minister, as well, to essentially take control over the CEO, who is an employee, not of the ministry of health but of local boards.

The bill sets up a health quality council, which in fact will not be able to hold the minister accountable, because none of the powers that are given to that council will allow them to, despite the excellent work that we know they actually do in most cases.

We were looking forward to this bill, after the Romanow report and the move to stop the creeping privatization of our health care system that's been going on with the Liberals in Ottawa and with the Tories here for the last several years. This was, we thought, a bill—an opportunity, as the government announced it—to have some real clauses in there that would stop in its tracks this creeping privatization. But it doesn't do that. It doesn't do anything. It says nothing about reversing the privatization of our health care services, and does nothing as well to truly support the principles of medicare.

I want to say that our colleague Shelley Martel, the member for Nickel Belt, worked very hard on this bill. I believe that the members of the public, in general, don't know about a lot of the work that goes on behind the scenes when we're not in session. I know that those were very long committee hearings in many communities, which was a good thing. Many members worked hard on the committee, and our Shelley Martel did a very good job in trying to work with the government and the stakeholders to find amendments that would make this bill work, and it just didn't happen. But to her credit, she worked very hard to try to make that happen.

You are aware of some of the comments that were made, even after the celebrated amendments that Liberals like to talk about now. After those amendments were made, there are comments from all kinds of people, from the Montfort Hospital, from—

Mr Bisson: Very good.

Ms Churley: My francophone pronunciation wasn't too bad, was it?

Here is one right here: "It is extremely difficult for Franco-Ontarians to fathom how a Liberal government could even propose to pass a law so draconian ... that it

brings us back to the sad days of the ill-advised and unconstitutional proposed closure of our hospital by the Ontario Health Services Restructuring Commission."

I'm not saying that. You might expect that, as a member of the opposition, I'd say things like that, which I am, but this is a quote from the chair of a hospital.

Again, "Bill 8 is nothing less than a blatant and dangerous attack on what Ontario's linguistic minority considers to be a sacred trust: the Franco-Ontarians' ability to make decisions that affect the development and the future of its own institutions...."

"Our volunteer members from the Montfort board of trustees will address more fully questions that concern them more directly ... but let me tell you that from the community's vantage point, we see this law as nothing more than a hostile takeover by the minister of an institution that Franco-Ontarians built."

It goes on.

A former Liberal cabinet minister from the David Peterson days said: "As a Liberal, I have seen better days. This law, Bill 8, is not the product of the Liberal Party that I know. In fact, it is in flagrant contradiction with some of the most basic principles that inspire and have always inspired my party.... This bill is a serious breach of confidence and of democratic principles, and like Mrs Lalonde, it is hard for me to believe that this is being done by a Liberal government."

Another quote: "We change governments; we change the flavour of the month. Now it's accountability. And it is imposed with a law so drastic ... that it rivals in scope the powers that were ceded to the restructuring commission by the previous regime, except this time it's the minister who seeks to increase his own power over hospitals and over the communities they serve."

These quotes, many from good Liberals, go on and on. That should be of major concern to you. There were some suggestions made by the member for Nickel Belt, perhaps from other members of the committee, but certainly from the community and the hospitals. If you want accountability, which nobody disagreed about improving, there are ways to go about it. There are such things as accountability agreements. If you want those negotiated, I said before and I will say again, rather than impose them, rather than set up a situation where the minister has complete control and the community and community boards are shut out, set up some kind of dispute resolution mechanism that will allow an independent third party to make the final decision.

That is a key piece that needs to be changed, and given that you refuse to do that and given the other problems with the bill you're aware of—I'm sure you're hearing from your constituents—and given the fact it that doesn't address some key issues around privatization of the health care system, this bill really does need to be withdrawn, there is absolutely no question about it. There is no way we can fix this bill so it is acceptable to our hospitals, our hospital boards and our communities. It has to be withdrawn and we have to start from scratch. Better to do that than go ahead with this thing, which is going to

cause more problems than the government can even dream about.

2040

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): It's a privilege to stand here in my place and speak in support of our bill, the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act. I think, unlike other regimes, unlike other governments that have passed through this place, we view health care and our Ontario medicare system as a moral enterprise and not as a centre of profit, not as a business venture.

In particular, I'm reminded of one of my professors during medical training, Dr Graham Vanderlinden, who was a neurosurgeon, a brain surgeon, practising at the Toronto Western Hospital. As we had just finished a procedure—it was actually the implantation of a nerve stimulator for the management of unmanageable chronic pain—

Interjection.

Mr Qaadri: I would recommend that procedure for the member for Leeds-Grenville.

After we finished that particular procedure, he turned and said to me very clearly something that really stuck with me and struck me, and that I think continues to inform our collective vision and our philosophy, and that was, "Why should people have to pay extra just because they're sick?"

It's precisely for that reason that we in this government, in this McGuinty Ontario, are actually seeking to strengthen the foundation of health care so we will not eventually end up in an Americanized, United States of Ontario system, which is really an ideal of wealth care.

Mr O'Toole: I think that probably much of what the member for Toronto-Danforth said is true. What I would like to put on the record is—I listened to the people of Durham, and for those listening, on Tuesday, March 23, 2004, there was an editorial comment in the Metroland newspaper, which is a Toronto Star paper, that says, "Bill 8 will decide health care's future." But it goes on to say that it's actually the demise of health care. It's the demise of volunteerism. It's the demise of all the things that the member for Etobicoke North stands for.

I guess the point I'm trying to make is, look at Bill 8. For the members, for the audience really—I'm speaking to my constituents in the riding of Durham, the people I care most about, but the people of Ontario are all included—it's a 45-page bill. But if you read the amended edition, it says, "Reprinted as amended by the standing committee on justice and social policy and as reported to the Legislative Assembly March 22." They have made so many amendments, it's an absolute shame. This bill needs to be completely revisited. There is about one page left that has any substance. The point is, they got it wrong.

Minister Smitherman wants to take all the control back to his office. I understand that. The Minister of Health wants to take control. Our former Minister of Health, the

member for Kitchener-Waterloo—if I may, with your indulgence, Mr Speaker; a personal friend of yours—Elizabeth Witmer, has done so much tireless work. Shelley Martel has done tireless work and made recommendations. Not one was adopted by the government, the government that listened to the input of the people of Durham—not one single amendment. But do you know what's important? They are going back out for consultations. Good luck to you.

Mr Bisson: I'm going to leave talking about amendments in committee to my good friend from Durham, because I worked in committee for a long time with the previous government. But that's for another debate.

I want to say, however, that I agree entirely with the comment my colleague the member for Toronto-Danforth made, which was echoed by my good friend from Durham, that if you take a look at this bill, it is basically about centralizing power in the minister's office. I think that's a mistake. I think we learned from the experience of what happened in education when the government decided they were going to do away with all those pesky boards and were going to make larger boards, so we had fewer education authorities—otherwise known as school boards—and centralized power. They told us that was going to be a good thing. We've learned over the long run that it has not served the education community well.

I believe it is better, when it comes to delivering services, be it health care or education, to do as much as possible to bring the decisions closer and closer to home. That's especially important as we move away from the Toronto centre. As we move to places like Sudbury, Windsor, Ottawa and other places, it's important that local hospital boards have as much ability as they need to run their hospitals according to the needs of the community. That's not to say they can't run these hospitals according to provincial guidelines. They've always done that. They've always had to operate within budgets that are assigned by the Ministry of Health. They've always had to put in place operational plans that are basically in keeping with what the Ministry of Health wants.

I agree with the member from Toronto-Danforth that where this government is going with this legislation is to centralize the decision-making in the minister's office. We need to resist that, and we should resent it, quite frankly, because it's a step in the wrong direction.

I know that my good friend Mr Smitherman means well, but he really needs to rethink what he's doing in this bill, because at the end of the day, it's exactly what the Tories did in education.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's a pleasure for me to add some comments. I think of one of my great constituents in Peterborough, Madge Hall, who happens to be the mother-in-law of my friend from Durham. I'm going to try to visit her on Saturday for Easter.

When I think of Madge, a lovely lady, I think of Bill 8. We want to make sure we have health services that are based on need, not the ability to pay, so that Madge can

go to the Peterborough Regional Hospital when she needs to. I know Madge is concerned about two-tier medicine in Peterborough, and Bill 8 gets rid of two-tier medicine. I think his mother-in-law, Madge Hall, wants to make sure she has full accessibility to services in Peterborough Regional Hospital. When I may visit her on Saturday, I want to be able to tell her that she has that ability.

Secondly—I hope this is not a prop, Mr Speaker—when I was in South Carolina recently, I picked up USA Today. A headline in the business section was, “Health Insurance Premiums Crash Down on Middle Class” in the United States. So let me tell you, this bill is part of the essential combat to make sure we don’t face those crushing premiums they’re facing south of the border. Bill 8 goes a long way in that particular area to prevent this from happening.

Now, the other thing on Bill 8: there have been a lot of complaints about 60 days to achieve accountability agreements with hospitals. There was a great example of a story a couple of weeks ago in the Toronto Star. They were saying that Hilary Short, the president of the Ontario Hospital Association, has \$24 million in her budget to put forward her case, but the hospitals spent a lot of money—

The Acting Speaker: Member for Peterborough, please take your seat; your time is up.

The member for Toronto-Danforth has two minutes to reply.

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Ms Churley: I want to say to my friends, this is really serious. You’ve been given your notes and your justification for supporting this bill, but let me tell you, it’s a big problem. It is a serious problem we’re trying to point out to you here. You should be listening to this. It is a problem, and some of you may know it.

I would say to the member, the good doctor from Etobicoke North, you don’t have to be a brain surgeon or a neurosurgeon to know that this bill is fatally flawed and that no operation will be able to save it, no matter how skilled the doctor is, with all due respect. Look, there is nothing in this bill that protects our public health care system. The preamble is great. It is wonderful. But then the bill goes on to not back up the preamble. So I would say to the members, if you keep on trying to justify—that’s the public relations part of the bill; it doesn’t do that.

The major thrust of this bill is to take over the community board roles in our ridings, and it is a major problem. There are other concerns, but if you truly wanted this bill to reflect the values that you talk about, then there would be something in there to stop the continuation of the Tory—your own version of the P3 hospitals.

You are the only ones who are saying, “Oh no, it’s not P3.” The health care coalition and everybody else out there looking at your model for the building of new hospitals are well aware that it is P3, the same deal as the Tories were making. So you’re not even protecting the

privatization of our health care system. Shame on you for—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much.

Further debate?

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I’ll be splitting my time with the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore today. I’m delighted to join in this debate this evening. I enjoyed the time I spent on the committee. We did travel across the province, we heard from many, many different people everywhere, from hospital boards to CEOs, to people who were interested in the health care system, to the doctors, to the nurses.

There were concerns raised on the initial bill when it came forward, but a number of amendments have since been made and, frankly, most of those individuals, when you speak to them now, are satisfied that we have listened very carefully to the concerns that were raised.

When I see members on the other side of the House, holding up the amendments as if we should be ashamed for making amendments, I suggest to them that they’ve got it backwards. We should be proud of the fact that we’ve listened to these individuals, that we’ve improved our legislation. We’ve improved our legislation, and that’s something that I know the members opposite would not be used to. They’d be very uncomfortable with that, because they never did it when they were in office, or if they did, they rarely did it. I think we’ve now got a much-improved piece of legislation in front of us.

I can tell you that we are focusing on the task at hand, and that task at hand goes well beyond Bill 8. The task at hand is improving our health care system. That’s what we’ve committed to do: improve that health care system. It’s a priority for us, I know it’s a priority for the NDP and I know it was probably a priority for the previous government. The problem is, they didn’t have the guts or the ability to make the changes to the system that we are now putting in place.

You can’t make those changes if you don’t have the tools to make them. You need to have accountability in the system, you need to make some of these tough choices, and we need to get all the players in the health care system to go along if we’re going to make those very important changes.

It’s important that we make these changes, because the people of this province are looking for improved accessibility to family physicians and primary care. It ain’t going to happen if we don’t have accountability in the system. They’re looking for reduced waiting times for services and procedures. That’s not going to happen either if we don’t bear down and get some control in this system and make sure that there’s accountability within the system. They’re looking to make Ontarians healthier, and that’s one of our goals as well. We’re going to accomplish those things, but it’s not going to be easy. It’s a very ambitious goal that’s going to take some decisive and strong leadership.

Every stakeholder, every health provider must be pulling in the same direction on this if our health care system is going to meet the needs of Ontarians. I would

suggest that likely somewhere around 95% of those health care providers are already on side, are ready to pull their weight. But the thing is, there will be a few rogue organizations or rogue individuals who don't want to go the route we want to go, who don't want to see reduced waiting times for procedures, who don't want to see the shift from institutionalized health care to community-based health care, which everybody in this House recognizes we have to do. There will be a very few rogue health care service providers who may fall into the accountability measures in this bill, but we have to have some tool to try to bring them along.

Yes, we could do what the previous government did and just appoint supervisors and take them over. We already have the authority to do that with hospitals under the Public Hospitals Act. We have that authority now, so this doesn't give us any more authority than we already have. What it does is give us additional tools to prod that system along, to make the very important changes that we have to make.

I served on a hospital board for nine years, and I was proud to do that. I can tell you, I've been in constant touch with the members of that hospital board, with the chair, with the CEO of the hospital, and they're supportive of what we're doing. It's Scarborough Hospital that I'm talking about. They're a visionary hospital. They're ahead of the game. They're already trying to move themselves into a more community-based operation. They recognize the need for accountability, and I can tell you they also know that it will never apply to them, because they're on side with what we're doing. They're on side with the changes that we're trying to make, but they recognize—

Mr McMeekin: They're ready to go.

Mr Duguid: They're ready to go. They're ready to make the changes that the residents of Scarborough need.

My time's running out. I'm about to pass it over to the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore. I've been delighted to be part of this process. I've enjoyed every part of it. This is an important bill if we're going to achieve our very important goals of improving the health care system.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): On October 2, the people of Etobicoke-Lakeshore chose to guarantee protection of universal health care, and so did I. That's why I am very pleased to rise tonight and talk about Bill 8. It's my first opportunity to talk about this piece of legislation.

Bill 8 is going to undertake some important steps forward in health care in our province by putting an end to creeping privatization and making universal public medicare the law in Ontario. When we travel across the province, whether it's on Bill 8 or any other piece of legislation, or any of the other aspects our government is undertaking, we have a chance to speak to Ontarians about what they want for the future of this province. They do want accountability. They want value for their dollars. That's why this legislation is so important, that we move along a road where we ensure that the funds we

put forward in our health care system are accountable to the people who are paying for it.

Like my friend who spoke before me, I too have had an opportunity to speak to the hospital in my riding, Trillium Health Centre, about the modern and innovative approaches they're bringing forward on health care. The positive results that they're hoping to achieve in some of their new clinics—our new women's health clinic that we'll be having at that centre. They're not concerned about this legislation, because they too are prepared to be accountable for the dollars that our government gives them to ensure results. They are pleased with the leadership of our government on issues of health care and our acknowledging that we need to move on the prevention front.

When I had a chance to say to them, "Give us your advice. What advice would you give our government as to the area where we can have the most impact on health care," they said, "Make sure kids get exercise, deal with the issue of obesity, stop smoking in our province and deal with that."

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Those are two very proud things that we have undertaken, because we want to make sure that Ontarians are healthy. We want to make sure that the health care budget does not blow up exponentially so that we can't spend money on education, we can't spend money on roads. We want to make sure that we get value for that dollar and that we spend money keeping Ontarians healthy instead of dealing with the crisis after it occurs.

I want to talk for a moment about the amendments, the fact that during the hearings of the committee my colleagues who traveled with that committee listened to the many recommendations brought forward and had a dialogue in the province. That is one significant difference from our predecessors that our government brings forward. We're not scared to have a dialogue with people across this province. We want their ideas, we want to work with them and we are prepared to listen to their viewpoints. The committee travelled to Toronto, Sudbury, Ottawa, Windsor, Niagara Falls, Timmins. It's part of a great process where we go out and talk to people about their issues and work with them.

Our friends across the House have really not talked about or acknowledged the amendments that have been made. We're going to clearly state that the government must make decisions that are in the public interest. We're going to make explicit that trade unions, individual doctors and doctors operating group practices are not the subject of accountability agreements. We're going to spell out the four types of providers that are the subject of accountability agreements: hospitals, long-term-care facilities, community care access centres and independent health facilities. We're going to clarify that accountability agreements are negotiated between the boards and the minister. We're going to commit to consult with the public about regulation.

Those amendments, as well as working with organizations like the Ontario Hospital Association, acknowledge

the voluntary boards and hospital trustees out there, that everyone is part of the solution. Unlike our predecessors, who didn't consult and made their own decisions in the backrooms of this building, we're out on the streets, out talking to people. We're proud to talk about the issues that are important to Ontarians. Those issues—as we heard loud and clear at the time of the election—include making sure their health care was protected. Protecting the great institution in our country that we're so proud of—universal medicare—is first and foremost on their minds. Bill 8 is a great first step in that direction.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Barrett: Just a comment on the presentations by the members for Scarborough Centre and Etobicoke-Lakeshore. I certainly want to follow the lead of our health critic, Elizabeth Witmer, in that we are seeing Premier McGuinty acknowledge some of the concerns about Bill 8 across the province. When I say “we,” I refer to the many hospital boards and stakeholders working with their MPP to fight this legislation. There are concerns that Bill 8 will kill volunteerism and democratic decision-making, certainly concerns I've received from the board of my area hospital—the hospital I was born in, Norfolk General—and that I've received from the board of the Brant Community Health Care System; that is, the Paris Willett Hospital and Brantford General Hospital.

We now hear that this government will undertake more public hearings on this particular piece of legislation. The Premier and the Minister of Health owe us that much in the province of Ontario.

During the consultations, as we know, the committee heard from delegations—doctors, nurses, hospitals, social workers, unions, just to name a few—all of whom presented so many varied concerns with this bill. We recognize that there have been some hastily drawn up amendments and adjustments, and many of these same concerns remain. I join these health organizations in requesting that much more time be put in to acknowledge and receive input on this bill. It's a bill that really has the potential to overturn the long-established and well-established local decision-making processes that we have in our hospitals.

Mr Bisson: I am so happy to have this occasion. My good friend the member for Toronto-Danforth said to me, “I really want to have the opportunity to say more,” but I said, “Listen, I really want to have an opportunity to respond to the comments made by the member for Scarborough Centre.” He said, “Tories did not have the guts make change.” Where was he for eight years? I remember Tories making all kinds of changes in this province—not that I agreed with them. But don't come into this House and cast aspersions that my friends in the Tory caucus didn't have the guts to make changes. I tell you, they were not short on guts.

To my friend from Scarborough Centre, when you throw those kinds of comments toward the opposition, you should be careful they don't come back at you. I remember attending the debate on the Adams mine site at the city of Toronto, and this member, a former member

of city council, was in favour of the Adams mine. When the legislation came into this House, where were your guts to stand by your convictions and vote against your government, if that truly is your belief? So don't come in here saying my friends don't have guts when you don't have guts to come into this House and vote as you feel.

Ms Churley: They're your friends now?

Mr Bisson: Well, they're my friends. I've got to say that. I have friends in the Tory caucus.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: That's the point. The Liberals think we should be partisan and not be friends with any of the members around here. I have friends in the Tory caucus, as I have friends in the Liberal caucus, and I want you to know that I've got some friends in the NDP caucus as well. So to the member for Scarborough Centre, don't cast aspersions on my friend over here for not having guts, because certainly they had lots of guts when they were here.

Ms Marsales: I'm absolutely honoured to be able to stand up and speak in favour of Bill 8. Health care was the number one issue in west Hamilton when we were out campaigning door-to-door, and if it has been said that all politics are local, I think it can equally be said that all health care is personal.

It's also very appropriate that I speak to health care, which we in Ontario have all come to expect during this month of April, which is Cancer Awareness Month. I have become painfully aware of the devastation this disease can have on family, friends and co-workers. Tonight I want to pay particular tribute to a lady, Maxi Kumagai, as she recovers from breast cancer surgery she had yesterday. Maxi was a first-generation Canadian immigrant and came to Hamilton with nothing. She and her husband worked very hard caring for others and raising their son. As a good and conscientious citizen of Ontario, Maxi cared for others. Today, Ontario should be caring for Maxi. She deserves the best health care Ontario can offer her. She deserves the best health care based on her needs, not based on her net worth.

In Hamilton West, we have those world-class health care facilities at Hamilton Health Sciences and St Joseph's Hospital. Another jewel in Hamilton's health care crown is McMaster Children's Hospital, offering one of the best neonatal units in Canada. Bill 8 will give Ontario health care to be proud of.

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Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I've got to tell you, it's getting near 9:30 of the clock and the Kool-Aid's still flowing real strong on that Liberal caucus side.

Applause.

Mr Hudak: They applaud that. It's a bad thing.

They're bragging about how Bill 8 is all about consultation. Give me a break. When George Smitherman, the Minister of Health, rose in this House to talk about Bill 8, there was not a single word about going out on first reading consultations and not a single word about going out on second reading consultations. Let's face the facts: you were forced out on consultations.

This bill was entirely messed up from square one. It was a colossal screw-up. If you take Bill 8 as it stands at the end of this process, if it passes—we think it should be tossed out as well—I bet you will find one, maybe two words, that are the same, one of which will be the number 8. This bill showed the incompetence of this government out of the gate and had absolutely nothing to do with what they said it had to do with. It was all about a colossal takeover of health care decision-making by the Ministry of Health.

If you want to talk about guts, don't give us this hybrid model where the CEO reports to the Ministry of Health and then to the board of directors. This hybrid model will ultimately satisfy nobody. Have the guts. Take over the hospitals. If you believe you can run things better through the Minister of Health's office, then take over the hospitals—there's guts. Show the guts and actually do that; otherwise, put your faith in local governance, as has been the history in the province of Ontario. Don't talk to us about guts.

To the member from Scarborough Southwest, who has flip-flopped on the Adams mine issue: It can't be easy being Dalton McGuinty, it can't be easy flip-flopping that much. He's got to use a lot of help over there. Seeing one vote on city council in favour of Adams mine and one vote against shows he's earned his Liberal stripes, a flip-flopper of the best of the Liberal kind.

The Acting Speaker: One of the Liberal members has to minutes to reply. I recognize the member for Scarborough Centre.

Mr Duguid: My sister is a nurse and has been for many years. She was, in fact, a nurse at North York and she was right in the middle of the SARS epidemic when that took place. I'm very proud of the work that she and all the nurses did across our province—not just during the SARS epidemic, but the work that they do in general. It's a very tough job. I know that when she gets home from work and I talk to her on the phone, she's beat. We work late hours, but I think her job is even tougher than what we have to do.

Interjection: Heart of the system.

Mr Duguid: They are the heart of the system. And when you look at what's going on right now in nursing, only 57% of them have full-time jobs. When you see that two million hours of triple time are currently being put forward in the system, nurses have the greatest risk of injury of any health care worker in our entire system.

When I look at that, I say it's time for accountability. It's time for us as a government, when we pass the billions of dollars that we do into the health care system, that we demand that hospitals ensure they hire more full-time nurses, ensure they improve the quality of care in nurses. If we don't have that ability, if we don't have the ability to hold hospitals accountable for that, like Bill 8 provides us with, then we're never going to get enough nurses back into the hospital system in this province. We're never going to get that system fixed up.

It's extremely important that Bill 8 go through. We have the courage to bring this bill through because it's a

bill that's going to improve the health care system. It's a bill that's going to help us reduce those waiting lists. It's a bill that's going help us make Ontario—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr Barrett: I certainly continue to receive phone calls and letters on Bill 8. They arrive at my office every day—Bill 8, the bill titled Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act. These phone calls and these letters, underline what I consider this government's misguided approach to ostensibly be seen as protecting and enhancing Ontario's medical system. As we all know, people cherish this system right across the Dominion of Canada.

Contrary to what government members across the way have been trying to sell, these concerned patients, health care workers, board members, physicians and others argue that this bill does the complete opposite of what it proposed to do. After watching this government dance around its election promises, that perception really comes as no surprise.

The groups that write to me are using words like “undermining,” “alarming,” “interfering” and “draconian.” I mentioned in a two-minute hit the presentation I received from the Brant Community Health Care System—the Paris Willett Hospital and Brantford General Hospital. On February 20 they wrote, “The bill will have the opposite effect and fundamentally undermine medicare in Ontario.”

On March 3, Norfolk General Hospital wrote, “This legislation may actually decrease accountability to our communities by undermining the role of local, voluntary governance in public hospitals in Ontario.” In the position paper attached to the Norfolk General Hospital presentation, the board states, “Bill 8 undermines the government's accountability to medicare,” the very accountability to medicare that this proposed legislation is supposed to enhance.

I received a missive from the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario, and they say, “Our concern is not over the principle of accountability per se, but rather with the draconian and one-sided approach the bill has taken.”

So there you go. These are the people we rely on, the people we depend on—they're on the front lines—to implement our government-funded health care system; in this case, through the hospital system. One of the main outcries I'm hearing from the front lines is the destruction of accountability of hospitals and their boards in favour of the alternative presented here, and the alternative is minister-directed, one-sided decision-making and intervention from on high.

Hospitals, their boards and associations have told the government in consultations that while part III of this bill is titled “Accountability,” it accomplishes the opposite. Although we all support the enhancement of hospital accountability to taxpayers in Ontario, it's the manner in which Bill 8 attempts to enhance accountability that's opposed. Of particular concern are the sweeping powers

this bill gives the Ontario Minister of Health. I'll give you an example. This bill gives the Ontario Minister of Health the right to, first of all, require hospitals to enter into accountability agreements, and secondly, to issue compliance directives to hospitals. Is this democratic renewal? I really don't think so. To direct a hospital to sign an agreement that has not been negotiated or agreed to but unilaterally imposed would effectively eliminate the input of the community in the fundamental decision-making process regarding hospital services provided in that same local community.

Basically, this would take the vital decision-making out of the hands of those who know the area, the people who know their neighbours and their needs, and put it in the hands of those who only think they know what's going on. We in Ontario must never forget the essential role that our local hospital boards have played and continue to play in the delivery of hospital-based health care services in Ontario.

I stress that these are voluntary boards, and as the Ontario Hospital Association recently pointed out in committee hearings, "The members of these boards are community leaders, business people and others with a civic orientation to community service. Many of you will know them as your neighbours and friends. These people are entrusted with the oversight, fiscal stewardship, mission and strategic direction" to look after their own hospital. They have "a single purpose in mind, and that is," very simply, "to create healthier communities ... these community leaders are a big part of the reason why today Ontario hospitals are viewed as leaders" with respect to not only accountability but also value for taxpayers' money. Leaders in accountability: the very accountability this bill both speaks to and undermines in the same breath.

Bill 8 does undermine—I'll use that word again—it undermines this local, voluntary governance of public hospitals by directing hospital boards to sign accountability agreements without negotiation. This is a poor idea. Our friends and our neighbours who sit on local hospital boards really are the best people to determine the health care services needed within their community. You know, those who choose to sit on local hospital boards do so for one reason, and for one reason alone, and that's to improve health care services for their fellow citizens.

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Directing a hospital to sign an agreement that has not been negotiated, nor agreed to for that matter, but unilaterally imposed, would effectively eliminate the vital decision-making function, the process that's so valuable in our hospital-based health care system. Moreover, this not only undermines the governance of hospitals, but it also contravenes the Public Hospitals Act, which states that hospital boards are, and I quote from the Public Hospitals Act, the "governing body or authority of a hospital."

As the Brant Community Healthcare System pointed out in a letter to Brant MPP Dave Levac—the letter was copied to me—"By undermining local voluntary com-

munity governance, our hospital will find it increasingly difficult to recruit community leaders to sit on our board and foundation." These are the community leaders who reside in the Brant county area, which I and the member for Brant represent. They won't be the only ones facing recruiting problems if this bill is passed in its present form.

Essentially, Bill 8 provides the minister with the authority to micromanage hospitals and to micromanage those who work within the system, in effect converting our health care system from a publicly funded, not-for-profit, charitable hospital corporation system governed by voluntary boards to a government agency.

There's also concern that, as the diminished role of local voluntary governance and public hospitals becomes clear, this will have not only a disastrous effect on recruiting new, energized board members, it will also have a disastrous effect on fundraising. I can tell you the enormous ramifications that would have on Norfolk General Hospital. In my riding, I had a fundraising campaign recently to expand our emergency department. It garnered millions and millions of dollars for hospital expansion, and this is in a very small community, a small county. West Haldimand General and Tillsonburg District Memorial have also had very significant success in accessing local community dollars over recent years. All of this would be at risk if we forge ahead with this ill-conceived bill.

What is the government's obligation with regard to accountability? The fact is there is no mutual accountability in this bill. It's not a two-way street. The current government is doing very little to address the real concern of Bill 8 and the real concern—and it came up in debate earlier this evening—is the neglect, and the financial neglect if you will, on the part of the federal government with respect to Ontario's health.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Churley: I will say again that the problem with this bill, and the issue that doesn't seem to be getting through to people as I listen to various people speak about this issue, is the fact that the bill doesn't really do what you say the bill is doing. It doesn't stop the creeping privatization of the health care system, although the preamble has it. It sounds nice, but when you read the bill and look at some of the actions of the government, it doesn't do what you say it's going to do.

Again, when certain members of the Liberal caucus—I guess they believe it. I guess you believe that the majority of health care providers out there in hospitals and community health centres and all these folks actually support it. I think that's what some people are saying, and it's just the ones who are disconcerted and really unhappy about the bill who are coming forward and saying all these horrible things. That's not it. That is not what's happening. People are very, very angry about this bill, for good reason. At least there was an opportunity during the committee hearings to fix that. It cannot be fixed now. There are too many problems with it, and you may believe that if you ram it through now and move

forward with it, over time it's going to settle down and things are going to improve and people will go away and forget it. These things do not get forgotten. The previous government's takeover of the education system is an example. That is what you are doing in the health care system. It will not work. It not only gets people mad at you, but it also doesn't work. It will be a disaster. You have to withdraw this bill.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I cannot believe that the member for Toronto-Danforth somehow thinks that we're trying to ram this bill through. If there's any bill that's been out for consultation, that we've taken our time and were willing to listen to the people—we made a firm and strong commitment. I remember when the Premier did this, about how we were going to stop the endless war we were having with the federal government about what was in the Medicare Act, and we were just going to make it an Ontario law and stop this privatization through the back door. In my riding, the future of the Stratford General Hospital, Listowel Memorial Hospital and St Mary's hospital rests on our ability to get this bill right. We're not going to ram it through; we're going to do it right.

My colleague for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot was talking about how the previous government really had ADD, attention deficit disorder. And though I agree with him, I think there was really another disorder, an obsessive-compulsive disorder, because the previous government was compulsive about giving untendered contracts to their friends. They were obsessive about saying anything to get themselves re-elected. That's why they lost their way. They were suffering from this compulsion, this obsession with politics rather than doing the people's business.

The people of Ontario want medicare. They want their Ontario government to be committed to medicare. They don't want there to be any question into the future. We're willing to listen to people and we've done that. And despite the fact that there are naysayers, when I have Sid Ryan on one side and the CEOs of hospitals on the other side telling us the bill is wrong, I think we must be doing something right.

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I want to thank my colleague for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant for his wise words this evening on Bill 8. I do want to thank the government side for announcing today—the Premier announced it—that Bill 8 will go back to committee after second reading for further submissions. But who I really want to thank is Elizabeth Witmer for forcing the government to do just that.

But it wasn't just Elizabeth Witmer, it was the hospital boards throughout this province. It was the Ontario Hospital Association and other stakeholders who made this government stand up and take notice that this would not be accepted. Granted, they're not going to ram this through; they're going to have us back to committee and we'll have some more time to spend on it. But essentially, at the end of the day, the government's going to

get the bill they want. But is it going to be the bill that Ontario wants? That's the question that remains.

What was rammed through—and we mustn't lose sight of this—was when the member for Toronto-Danforth put forth a very good motion to have the finance minister appear before the committee on general government. That motion was defeated by the government side of this House. That was rammed through. Now that's what you call ramming through, and an absolute affront to democracy to the people of Ontario.

So what we're asking now is: At the end of the day, are you going to do the same with Bill 8, when you don't allow the changes that need to be made? I agree with the member from Toronto-Danforth that what you really need to do is just withdraw the bill, because it's beyond repair.

Mr Bisson: I've got to take issue with what the member said. The member says this bill is all about taking the ideas in the Canada Health Act and bringing them over provincially so we can stop privatization. If the bill really did that, we could probably have a pretty good debate about how to get this through the House pretty fast. But that's not what the bill does.

I just want to read one letter from the James Bay General Hospital, signed by Stella Wesley, who's the chair of the board: "While a number of changes were made to the bill, we believe that the amendments have not yet corrected the most serious deficiencies in the bill. We believe further changes need to be made to sufficiently safeguard the critical role of community governance of hospitals. We serve the communities of Moosonee, Fort Albany and Attawapiskat and each community is represented on our hospital board by dedicated community volunteer board members. Currently, 10 of the 12 board members are aboriginal and we feel this link to our communities is an essential component for maintaining and improving the health services provided in each community. Our communities are unique and it is essential that the governance of our hospital be locally controlled in a meaningful manner without interference from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care...."

We strongly recommend that the bill be returned to the standing committee for public hearings following second reading for further amendments. Ontario hospitals would welcome the opportunity to work on additional changes that will allow us to move forward...."

They go on to talk about, "The government can bypass hospital boards, the people who know the most about the hospital and the services it provides to the community." That's essentially what's wrong with the bill.

I have another letter from the Timmins and District Hospital, which I don't have time to read. I have others from Smooth Rock Falls, Kapuskasing and Hearst, and they're all saying the same thing: "This is a power grab for the Minister of Health. It has nothing to do with protecting the principles of medicare in this bill." So let's not continue in the way we're going. I agree with the member from Toronto-Danforth: Withdraw the bill and reintroduce—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much.

The member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant has two minutes to reply.

Mr Barrett: I appreciate the comments of the members for Toronto-Danforth and Timmins-James Bay. I think we have agreement on a number of issues. We certainly recognize the written input that we've received that uses such words, with respect to this bill, as "draconian," as I mentioned earlier, "alarming," "one-sided," "badly flawed," "hastily drafted" to describe Bill 8. Why are they using words like these? Because this bill is all of these things.

These groups, whose only purpose is to create healthier communities, are hoping that they will get some sort of reaction to their concerns from this government. I thank the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for acknowledging this kind of input. The response to date from this government, notwithstanding the announcement today, can essentially be described as underwhelming, to say the least.

Although fresh hearings are on the way, I know the groups that write to us will appreciate this: It does "give the government the opportunity," as the member for Perth-Middlesex indicated, to get it right.

Unlike the Liberals, who refuse to accept any opposition amendments, I know the member from Perth-Middlesex made mention of the previous government. Our previous government was quite willing to include some of the ideas provided by the opposition. While the Liberals have made some amendments to Bill 8, they were not open to any suggestions from the opposition benches. This is shameful. No opposition amendments were included. This is shameful, given the fact that the members opposite claim to be open and transparent in the spirit of democratic—

The Acting Speaker: I want to thank the member for his concluding comment.

It being past 9:30, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 pm.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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Wednesday 7 April 2004

Mercredi 7 avril 2004



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 7 April 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 7 avril 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): Today I will be introducing two bills that would fix the dates of future provincial elections in Ontario. Government sources have told the media that the Premier is considering legislation that would extend its current mandate beyond the promised four-year term by an extra seven months, into 2008. The two bills I will introduce are identical except for one thing: They offer different dates for the next provincial elections. Those dates are October 4, 2007, and June 7, 2007. The October 4 date is the true four-year mark from the last provincial election. The June 7, 2007, date is earlier, addressing any concern regarding conflicts with elections at other levels of government.

In either case, subsequent elections would follow every four years. I am giving the members of the Legislature a choice, and I can support either bill. What I cannot support is any effort of this government to break yet another election pledge by stretching out the time in office well beyond their promised four-year term. I don't think the people of Ontario can afford this government for that long.

The legislation I will introduce would also allow for early elections as a result of non-confidence votes. However, I am incorporating one essential safeguard against any government that might be tempted to engineer a vote on a confidence matter. My legislation would require a majority of the Legislature and a majority of the opposition to support a non-confidence motion in order for an election to be triggered. My biggest concern is that the Premier is essentially saying, "Sure, we want elections every four years, but just not for us." I cannot accept this double standard.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): The Don Valley West One-Tonne Challenge is a local response to a national challenge. Every year, each Canadian produces an average of five tonnes of greenhouse gases. The emissions by individual Canadians account for approximately 28% of Canada's total. The One-

Tonne Challenge asks and pushes Canadians to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 20% or one tonne.

On March 27 of this year, interested residents of Don Valley West and field experts convened at York University's Glendon College campus for a strategy session to plot out how we can meet that target in Don Valley West. Specific suggestions were taken from the participants' discussions and were submitted to a coordinator of the Don Valley West One-Tonne Challenge, Andy Horsnell, to be incorporated into a formal proposal.

As a member of this government's conservation action team, I'm pleased to say that many of the suggestions we talked about in that meeting echo the recommendations of our conservation action team. I want to acknowledge John Godfrey, the federal member of Parliament for Don Valley West, for his efforts in spearheading the initiative in the riding and his understanding that all levels of government must be involved co-operatively. In 1999, John co-wrote a book entitled *The Canada We Want*, in which he argues for the need for Canada to have new national projects. The One-Tonne Challenge can be one such national project. However, local responses to the challenge are necessary for the initiative to move forward. I'm proud to represent a community that has embraced this challenge and has already taken concrete steps to ensure that we do our part. We're ready to take the next step, and we hope that our example will encourage other ridings to do the same.

MOTORCYCLE INSURANCE

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I rise to express the concern of motorcyclists all over this province with rapidly rising insurance costs. Over the past two years alone, the premiums for mandatory insurance coverage for motorcyclists have increased an average of over 40%.

A constituent's letter I recently received exemplifies the seriousness of the situation. Between last December and March of this year, the quote he received from his insurance company had increased from \$1,300 to \$2,325, due to a rate increase on February 1, 2004. Meanwhile, he, like many other motorcyclists in Ontario, was under the impression that the Liberal government had frozen insurance rates for motor vehicles, which by definition includes motorcycles.

This constituent is not alone. Over 250,000 people drive a motorcycle in Ontario. It is a \$1.25-billion industry that, through the manufacturers, distributors, dealers and related services, employs over 8,000 people.

Yet due to skyrocketing insurance rates, this industry has suffered significantly in past years.

In my own beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, rising insurance rates are a particular concern. Each year in early July—July 9 to July 11 this year—the town of Parry Sound is host to Canada's largest sport bike rally, attracting over 2,000 motorcyclists from all over the continent. This is an event that has become increasingly well-recognized in the sport bike community, has been a consistent source of revenue to the local economy and has become one of the summer's most important community events.

Unless these insurance rates change soon, the numbers will dwindle, and Parry Sound's local economy, like the motorcycle industry throughout this province, will suffer unnecessarily.

ORGAN TRANSPLANTS

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): As a result of a relaxation in the health environment under the government of Dalton McGuinty, recently at the London Health Sciences Centre, Dr Patrick Luke and Dr Vivian McAlister performed London's first kidney-pancreas transplant on Tossa Vollrath, who suffered from type 1 diabetes for 20 years.

The results of this groundbreaking surgery have been amazing. Every night, Ms Vollrath had to hook up to a home kidney dialysis machine to cleanse her blood. Now she no longer requires such action to remain active and healthy. Her new pancreas provides regulated insulin and her new kidneys eliminate the need for dialysis. Basically, her diabetes has been cured because of this transplant. She can now enjoy her life and be happy with her family.

This is a perfect example of the London Health Sciences Centre and its physicians showcasing their expertise in the area of transplantation. I congratulate the two doctors for their performance in that surgery. Hopefully, we'll see more action in the future under this government.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND RAILWAY

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I rise in this House today to remind the government of the commitment they made in the last election, and that was the plight of the Ontario northland with regard to the Ontario Northland rail services. I said at the time, when the government announced that they weren't going to privatize the rail service, that was a step in the right direction. However, we have yet to hear from this government what its plan is when it comes to the necessary investments that are desperately needed at the ONR to increase services, so passengers from both northern and southern Ontario are able to take the train either to or from northern Ontario.

We recognize—I think all of us in this Legislature and certainly all people in northern Ontario recognize—that

the Ontario Northland can and should play an important role when it comes to not only basic transportation needs, but also when it comes to the issue of being able to develop northern Ontario, vis-à-vis the tourism industry.

So I say to the government, it's a step in the right direction. You announced that you weren't going to privatize; for that, we give you credit. But we are still waiting today for any move on the part of this government to make announcements about what kind of investments they're prepared to make when it comes to the Ontario Northland.

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I noticed about a week ago that there were some significant announcements made when it came to the transit services of the city of Toronto. I also note that in previous governments there were announcements about investments with GO Transit. I just say that we in north-eastern Ontario are still waiting to hear from this government in order to find the investments necessary to make sure that the Ontario Northland is able to build itself into the strong viable presence that it should be in north-eastern Ontario.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Citizens are concerned by the recent changes surrounding electricity in Ontario. They are outraged by the gross mismanagement of the previous government. Allow me to name but a few examples of Tory mismanagement in the past few years:

As stated in this morning's Toronto Sun, one in every three employees of OPG earned more than \$100,000 last year. What about the Tories' close friends—Tom Long, Leslie Noble and Paul Rhodes—who were paid more than \$5.6 million by Hydro One? What about the top brass at OPG, getting \$31 million in bonuses while OPG reported losses of nearly half a billion dollars in 2003? Who is footing the bill now for this Conservative mismanagement? Ontario consumers.

Our government is working hard to fix the hydro problem, whether it's by our government's initiative to conserve energy in the public workforce or whether it's by our government's plan to generate new electricity in Ontario for the first time in nine years.

The McGuinty government did not create this hydro mess, but I can tell you that we sure are cleaning it up.

HIGHWAY TOLLS

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I hope the Hansard clerks will entitle this statement "Tolls Confusion." The reason I want to speak to the issue of the highway tolls policy today is that the Minister of Transportation and his cabinet colleagues apparently are too confused to know what a tolls policy is. The fact of the matter is that over the last few days the minister and the Premier have talked about tolls with no clarity, no indication of how or where. We're getting phone calls and e-mails from across the province from people who are in the dark about what this

government's intentions really are. People don't know if they're going to be paying tolls tomorrow morning going to work or shipping their goods or going to their cottage. This is what happens when a minister simply throws out trial balloons without having regard to a clear policy statement.

Over the past few days, this minister has suggested that there may or may not be tolls on Highway 69. Yesterday, within minutes, he changed his mind on this issue. How much confidence can the people of Ontario really have in this government when from one day to the next—even within question period—they change their position on something as important as an issue like this?

Does the Minister of Transportation not understand that with each irresponsible statement, such as the ones he has been making, he is confirming further that this government has a serious leadership deficit? Does this government have a policy on tolls or not? If they do, let them be clear about what it is, and if they don't, let's work together to make sure that they do have a policy that the people of Ontario can rely on.

CANADIAN WOMEN'S HOCKEY TEAM

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): Team Canada struck gold again last night in the World Women's Hockey Championship. Congratulations to all the players, especially the eight team members from Ontario: Becky Kellar from Hagersville, Gillian Ferrari from Thornhill, Cheryl Pounder from Mississauga, Gillian Apps from Unionville, Jayna Hefford from Kingston, Cassie Campbell from Brampton, and Cherie Piper and Vicky Sunohara from my hometown of Scarborough. You make us all proud.

But special congratulations to their coach. Karen Hughes, another Scarboroughite, head coach of the women's national hockey team for the 2003-04 season, took her team to a smashing 2-0 finish against the US in the World Women's Hockey Championship at the Halifax Metro Centre last night. This is the eighth time in a row this team has won the world title.

Ms Hughes has been a member of Canada's international women's coaching pool since 1996. As you may remember, Ms Hughes was an assistant coach with Canada's women's Olympic team which won the gold medal at the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. She also coaches the University of Toronto Varsity Blues women's team.

But here is the kicker: She is also a member of our family here at Queen's Park. Ms Hughes is a full-time employee here. She is a member of the Ontario public service and has been for 14 years now.

We're very proud of her accomplishments. We'd like to congratulate Ms Hughes and Team Canada for the great job they did last night.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): The Liberal cloud of secrecy continues to grow. Dalton McGuinty

promised open and accountable government and Dalton McGuinty has broken that promise. On March 1, Dalton McGuinty shut down an inquiry being considered for the review of the vice-chair of the Ontario Securities Commission. On March 24, Dalton McGuinty once again stepped in to ensure that there was no sunlight and no light of day on the Ontario Securities Commission. Last week, again Dalton McGuinty intervened to put a cloud of secrecy over the Sorbara affair. Apparently George Bush will let Condoleezza Rice testify, but Dalton McGuinty won't let his own finance minister testify at the general government committee. It's an absolute disgrace.

We in the opposition are forced to ask for information through access-to-information requests and we still don't get the information. We have to appeal. We have to seek mediation. We have to call upon a legislative officer of this House to step in to help this government comply with the law and release documents and information.

The latest example comes from the Premier's office, where they say they will only respond to the access-to-information request on July 8, a full week and a half after this chamber closes down for the summer.

We'll continue to expose this secretive, manipulative government for what it is.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated April 7, 2004, of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FIXED DATES FOR ELECTIONS (OCTOBER 4, 2007 COMMENCEMENT) ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR UNE DATE D'ÉLECTION FIXE (À COMPTER DU 4 OCTOBRE 2007)

Mr Sterling moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 51, An Act to amend the Election Act to provide for elections on fixed dates commencing October 4, 2007 / Projet de loi 51, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale pour prévoir la tenue d'élections à une date fixe à compter du 4 octobre 2007.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): As I indicated before in my statement, this bill calls for the next election to be on October 4, 2007, and every other election thereafter, every four years, on the first Thursday in October, each and every year.

This bill also calls for the fact that a non-confidence motion would only be valid in terms of dissolving the Legislature if it was supported by a majority of the Legislature and a majority of the opposition, in order to prevent the governing party from engineering a non-confidence motion that they would lose.

1350

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA PROTECTION DE L'EMPLOI DES POMPIERS VOLONTAIRES

Mr Arnott moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 52, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 in order to protect the employment of volunteer firefighters / Projet de loi 52, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la prévention et la protection contre l'incendie afin de protéger l'emploi des pompiers volontaires.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

The ayes have it.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): Members may recall that I introduced a bill similar to this in the previous Parliament. It was Bill 130. It had more debate than any private member's bill, I think, in the history of this province, going back to 1950, but the problem persists and I'm continuing to raise this issue.

The bill amends the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, with respect to salaried firefighters who also work as volunteer firefighters. If a person is denied membership in an association of firefighters, is expelled or disciplined by the association or engages in reasonable dissent within the association in connection with this kind of dual employment, the association is not permitted to require the employer to refuse to employ the person as a salaried firefighter, terminate his or her employment as a salaried firefighter or refuse to assign the person to fire protection services. The person is also entitled to fair representation by the association. The person who believes that any of the rights has been contravened may file a complaint with the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

PROTECTION OF MINORS FROM SEXUALLY EXPLICIT GOODS AND SERVICES ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA PROTECTION DES MINEURS CONTRE LES BIENS ET SERVICES SEXUELLEMENT EXPLICITES

Mr O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 53, An Act to protect minors from exposure to sexually explicit goods and services / Projet de loi 53, Loi visant à protéger les mineurs contre les biens et services sexuellement explicites.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): In respect to former member Bob Wood from London, who introduced this bill in June 2000, I was supportive of the bill. The bill prohibits a person from knowingly selling, offering to distribute or display sexually explicit goods or services to a minor in any premise or place. The prohibition does not affect activities in a private residence. The real intent here is to take appropriate action to protect minors from exposure to sexually explicit material.

FIXED DATES FOR ELECTIONS (JUNE 7, 2007 COMMENCEMENT) ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR UNE DATE D'ÉLECTION FIXE (À COMPTER DU 7 JUIN 2007)

Mr Sterling moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 54, An Act to amend the Election Act to provide for elections on fixed dates commencing June 7, 2007 / Projet de loi 54, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale pour prévoir la tenue d'élections à une date fixe à compter du 7 juin 2007.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): This bill is identical to the other bill, except that the date is different. There would be an election on June 7, and every four years thereafter, on the first Thursday in June. This is to avoid the conflict with municipal elections that might occur in the fall. We don't want to give this government the excuse that they're going to go to a four-and-a-half-year term rather than a four-year term. This province can't afford this government that long.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to seek unanimous consent to move a motion with regard to the Keele landfill site.

The Speaker: The member for Oak Ridges has asked for unanimous consent. I heard a no.

ANNIVERSARY OF RWANDAN GENOCIDE

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Being the 10th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, I believe we have unanimous consent for all three parties to make a five-minute statement to commemorate the victims.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The government House leader has asked for unanimous consent. Agreed.

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Today, April 7, is the day that the United Nations, Canada and many countries around the world have chosen to mark the 10th anniversary of one of the most heinous crimes of the 20th century, the genocide of more than 800,000 people, members of the Tutsi tribe in Rwanda.

I invite my fellow Ontarians to reflect on this unspeakable crime and to express once again our horror and revulsion at this deliberate human slaughter.

The commemoration of this tragedy reminds us of the need to remain ever vigilant in protecting human life everywhere. We must promote the basic values of decency, justice and due process, which are the most effective guarantees of freedom from fear and freedom from tyranny.

Ontario is the adopted homeland of people who come from diverse parts of the world to create a better life for themselves and their families. We are a proud collection of many ancestries, histories, languages, cultures and beliefs. It is that diversity that imbues us with a particularly keen sensitivity to the fortunes of people everywhere in the world. In a very real sense, as Ontarians, our sisters and brothers live all over the globe. Together we celebrate their joys and successes. In times of sorrow, we also share their suffering and mourn their loss.

We are proud of the democratic traditions of our province. We are proud of the diversity of our heritage that contributes immensely to the vitality and prosperity of our society. We are proud that we live in one of the most culturally diverse and most successful societies in the world.

Accordingly, we are particularly appalled at the inhumanity that planned and perpetrated the massacre of 800,000 people. We are also ashamed of the inability of the world community to prevent it or even to intervene. As we reflect on this tremendous loss, we are also reminded through recent events in our own country that unchecked hate and intolerance sow the seeds of violence. They must not be allowed to take root, whether abroad or at home. We must commit ourselves to be ever vigilant against such atrocities in the future. To do otherwise would jeopardize the very values we hold dear, the very values that make us all human: truth, justice, peace.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): Last Saturday morning, as is my normal routine, I was reading

through a stack of my weekly newspapers. I eventually got around to reading the *Globe and Mail*. In the *Globe and Mail*, there was an article that seared into the core of my being, a vision of unspeakable horror. I would expect that some members of the House would have read the same article. But if you haven't, I'd like to relate briefly some of its contents.

The article told the story of Athanasie Mukarwego, a young mother who was a high school teacher in Kigali in 1994. On April 6, just 10 years ago yesterday, she heard the news that the president of Rwanda had been killed in a plane crash. There was an ominous sense that immediately went through her community, a sense that something terrible was about to happen. Over the next 100 days the world was to witness again the atrocity of genocide, in stark contrast to the beautiful and scenic African land of Rwanda.

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Within days, Athanasie's husband, along with the other men in her community, was brutally tortured and killed because he was a Tutsi and for no other reason. His national identity card became his death warrant because it indicated he was a Tutsi. The bloodthirsty Hutu killers were not satisfied with killing the Tutsi men. In fact, later it became apparent that Hutu men who refused to participate in the killings were themselves hacked to death with machetes, as barbaric and revolting as that sounds.

After her husband was killed, Athanasie was subjected to the most dehumanizing torture that a woman could face. The rampaging Hutu mobs used her as a sex slave for 89 days, repeatedly assaulting her in her own bedroom while her children were crying in the next room. Athanasie was a Christian and is today. Understandably, while trying to endure through this ordeal, she questioned her faith. She asked herself, "Does God exist? We were always taught that God loves us. He would not have let me live through this. Clearly, he does not love me."

In the end, it was her love of her children that helped her to want to live to see the end. When the mob was finished with her, after 89 days, they took her outside intending to shoot her. One of the soldiers said to her, "Speak for the last time." She did, and she remembers every word she said: "When I see you, your youth, your strength, I pity you. You could use it to protect those who need protection, but instead you use it to kill. We are innocents. There is not even a stick in my house. No one has ever received so much as a nasty look in my house, and yet you will kill me. The others who died were innocent, and we will all go to another life, one you won't have."

They said to each other, "Why isn't this woman afraid?" She answered, "All who live must die." Her courage and humanity in the face of death stunned the killers, and they couldn't do what they had set out to do. Perhaps they finally felt revulsion at the blood on their hands. They let her go, and 10 years later she has been able to tell her story. In the end, as the article says, this is a hopeful story. Athanasie feared contracting HIV and was certain she would because of the prevalence of that

horrible disease in Africa, but she didn't and her health was eventually restored.

This former high school teacher now serves as a coordinator in a village called Hope, counselling women like her who were raped during the genocide. In Rwanda, there is peace between the Hutus and Tutsis. The national identity cards no longer identify people as Hutu or Tutsi but simply as Rwandan. First steps which represent national reconciliation are occurring, even as those responsible for inciting this act of genocide are being held accountable for their crimes.

As we reflect on the events of 10 years ago, I am reminded of an old adage, and perhaps I'm paraphrasing it: The only way evil can triumph is if good people are indifferent and do nothing. The Western world, the United Nations, the European Community, the Canadian government, the Canadian people, we in this House, what did we do during these infamous 100 days when evil reigned supreme in central Africa and 800,000 people were being slaughtered? Where was our expression of outrage? Where was our moral indignation? Where was our support for General Dallaire, who requested reinforcements and a revised mandate to come to the aid of the victims? What did we do? Thinking of the history of mankind, what will we do the next time this happens?

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): This commemoration today is about reminding ourselves about the genocide of over 800,000 people in Rwanda in 1994. It's hard for most of us to imagine horror and, yes, evil on such a scale, but it is very clear, historically clear, that this happened.

As the courageous Canadian General Roméo Dallaire reminds us, it happened on our watch. General Dallaire and others warned the world and, in particular, they warned the Western world about what was happening. Yet nothing was done. General Dallaire wrote that the UN Security Council members "procrastinated, bickered and cynically pursued their own selfish foreign policies."

The United Nations 1948 genocide convention obligated governments to intervene to stop this kind of killing, but still, nothing was done. It was a shocking and shameful failure, and we are marking that failure here today. The message has to be, "Never again," but this message has to mean action, not just words.

In the years after Rwanda, there have been some signs that the world is taking its responsibilities to prevent genocide more seriously. The Canadian-backed report *The Responsibility to Protect* lays out a framework for when military intervention, always a last resort, must happen. It argues that there is an international responsibility to protect civilians where the people face large-scale murder and where the state involved is unable or unwilling to prevent it.

Today there are United Nations-mandated troops in Ituri province in northeastern Congo as well as in Liberia, both of which have stopped much bloodshed. The setting up of the International Criminal Court, unfortunately rejected by the United States, is another positive step. But as United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan has put it, the Security Council is still "tardy and

hesitant" when it comes to actually doing something about mass murder. We still have a long way to go.

Here in Ontario, while we are very far from Rwanda, we need to redouble our efforts to stop racism and discrimination. If people are unwilling to believe the worst about their neighbour, they are less susceptible to propaganda of the most hateful kind.

We have built a generally tolerant, peaceful society here in Canada, but recent events show that we are not immune to hate and hate crimes. We must also ensure that Canada's role in the world, our main role in the world, is to assist the international community through peacekeeping as well as building and strengthening the institutions, such as the International Criminal Court and the United Nations, that will help to prevent another Rwanda.

Many of us ignored what was going on in 1994. Perhaps there were more glamorous things happening in the world, or things which captured the headlines more easily. But the genocide of over 800,000 people is something that we cannot allow to happen again. It's clear now that we have the possibility, that we have the institutions to prevent it. We must all dedicate ourselves to that now.

The Speaker: Thank you for the statements. I'm going to ask all members to rise for one minute of respectful silence, and I'd also ask those in the gallery to do so.

The House observed one minute's silence.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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ORAL QUESTIONS

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): If I could at the outset, I just want to congratulate the three members for three excellent presentations on what is a true human tragedy.

I want to return to the Minister of Finance once again, to talk about the ethical scandal surrounding his involvement with Royal Group Technologies, a company that he directed for almost a decade and a company under three serious investigations, including a criminal probe.

In his letter dated February 27, Mr Justice Coulter Osborne ordered you to "ensure that you are in no way involved in any matters having to do with Royal Group Technologies and CCRA," the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency. I want to ask you specifically, what have you done to comply with Mr Justice Coulter Osborne's request?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I will just advise the member that I've taken every step necessary to ensure that I don't have any involvement with the Canadian revenue agency in respect of anything dealing with Royal Group Technologies.

Mr Baird: It's a simple question and I don't think we got a clear answer. I think we want to know what spe-

cifically you have done to “ensure” that you are not involved with this scandal. You are the minister of revenue. The Ministry of Finance and the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency talk daily and conduct investigations, often jointly, and the Ontario Ministry of Finance can conduct investigations specifically themselves.

I would like you to stand in your place and inform the House of specifically what you have done to date to ensure that you, your political staff and the officials who report to you are no longer involved and at no time will involve themselves in this investigation. Will you do that, Minister?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I'm not sure whether the acoustics are not working in this room or the member from Nepean-Carleton can't hear. I've said in response to his first question, and I'll say it again, I have taken every single step to make sure that I have no involvement in anything that might transpire with the Canadian revenue agency in any investigation relating to Royal Group Technologies.

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): What was happening when you were in the Mulroney government?

Mr Baird: I say to the member from St Catharines, he can talk to one of his cabinet colleagues if he wants to know what was going on in the Mulroney government.

Minister, you are accountable to the people of Ontario through their elected representatives in this House. You've said you have taken every measure necessary. I want to know, the people of Ontario want to know and, when there is a serious investigation by three bodies into the conduct of a company which you personally directed for 10 years, they are entitled to know what specific measures and the details of the specific measures you've taken to ensure that you're not involved in this investigation. You are the chief tax man in Ontario. We want to know what your involvement is with the chief tax collector. Would you enumerate specifically to the House the specific measures that you've taken to distance yourself, your officials and your political staff from this investigation? Will you do that, Minister?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I will reiterate: During the some nine years that I acted as a director of Royal Group Technologies, I acted in every single instance with the highest degree of integrity, if I might say so myself. I invite my friend from Nepean-Carleton to visit that level of integrity now and again. It will be an entirely new experience for him. I simply repeat my answer, that I have taken every step necessary to ensure that I do not put myself in a position of conflict of interest. That is my duty as a minister of the crown. That was my duty when I swore the oath as Minister of Finance and I will honour that duty every single day that I'm in this job, I tell my friend from Nepean-Carleton.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Yesterday you introduced a bill in the House that demonstrates one more time that

your government is much more interested in spin than in demonstrating leadership. The spin begins with your reference to the Adams mine lake. One of these days we will have your Minister of Natural Resources tell you what a lake really is. What is more offensive, though, than the spin that this minister has put on this piece of legislation is the absolute, draconian provisions in this bill that rob Ontario citizens of this province of their fundamental right of action in sections 4 and 5. This minister has absolutely put the government above the law and robbed individuals, property owners in this province, of fundamental property rights and rights of action.

I want to know how the minister can justify such a draconian measure in this act that robs individuals in this province of their fundamental rights. What signal does that send to the business community, not only in Ontario but across the world?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I recommend that the member opposite read completely the bill that was introduced two days ago in this Legislature. You would learn, honourable member, that there is also a provision in the legislation that will compensate the proponent for any out-of-pocket expenses that the proponent can demonstrate to this government. This government wants to be open and fair and transparent. That is exactly what this legislation will achieve.

Mr Klees: I strongly urge the minister to read her own legislation. The kind of reimbursement that the minister speaks to is pocket change compared to the kind of investment that has been made in these properties and it's a signal. More important than the effects on this particular bill is the signal that this minister is sending as to how credible this government is with regard to property rights, with regard to fundamentally respecting contract law in the province. They've done it in other pieces of legislation as well. This is one more step: an assault and affront on business in this province. How can the minister justify placing herself above the law through this legislation?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: The purpose of this legislation is to protect a very important source of water in the Temiskaming area. That is the goal of the legislation. This government recognizes that there have been out-of-pocket expenses provided by the proponent and the legislation also has a very detailed list on how the proponent will be compensated when the proponent is able to demonstrate the cost. I would say that is number one—recognizing the interest of business. Most importantly, this bill is about protecting water sources and water resources in the province. It's something that your government neglected; it's something that this government wants to make our hallmark.

Mr Klees: Let me tell the minister what our government did. One of the things that our government did was to permanently close the Keele landfill site. The motion that I wanted to put earlier was exactly this: that this House reaffirm the former government's commitment to keep the Keele landfill site permanently closed.

Members opposite, the House leader for the Liberals refused to give unanimous consent for that. I want to put it to the minister now. In light of the fact that your government refused to give us an opportunity to confirm this motion, will you stand in your place now—in light of the fact that you are willing to turn over and overturn every other piece of contract law in the province of Ontario, I don't trust your government to keep this commitment—will you stand in your place now and, for the people of York region and Ontario, confirm that you will not reopen the Keele landfill site? Will you do that today?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: First of all, I want to remind the member opposite that unlike the previous government, which tended to micro-manage and get involved in individual instances and issues, this government intends to address the issue around municipal solid waste with a comprehensive diversion plan. That is our commitment. We will assist municipalities in that regard. The member opposite knows very well that this government has committed that it will not reopen Keele, and I will do that in the House yet again today.

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LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. Before the election, you promised a better life for seniors living in nursing homes and homes for the aged. You promised an additional \$6,000 a year for each and every resident.

Seven months later, nothing has happened, except the situation has gotten worse. Seniors in Ontario nursing homes are eating sandwiches for supper because the daily food allowance of \$5.24 doesn't allow for anything more. They get a maximum of one bath or one shower a week.

These are our parents and our grandparents. They deserve to spend their last years in comfort and in dignity. So we must ask the question: Will you honour your election pledge to increase long-term-care funding, or is this going to be another of your broken promises?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm pleased and honoured to have the opportunity to tell the honourable member that his assertion about the quality of care in Ontario's long-term-care facilities is just plain wrong. This government has taken steps early on in our mandate to ensure the protection of the individuals who are staying there.

He does not own the issue of compassion for those people whom we view as our parents and our grandparents and the like. Furthermore, my colleague the member from Nipissing has been involved in a comprehensive review of the long-term-care facilities in this province. Very shortly, we'll be moving forward with a comprehensive plan to improve the quality of long-term-care facilities for today and for tomorrow.

Mr Hampton: It was a simple question. This government, during the election, promised to increase funding for seniors who live in long-term-care facilities by \$6,000

a person. I didn't hear an answer. Now, maybe you think that's acceptable, but I think this is a basic question of human dignity for people who have already made their contribution to the province.

They deserve to have more than one shower or bath a week; you get more than that if you're in jail. They deserve more than \$5.24 a day for meal allowance; you get more than that if you're in jail. So I ask the minister again, are you going to increase funding for long-term care in this province? You promised \$6,000 more a year. Are you going to do it, yes or no?

Hon Mr Smitherman: In answer to the honourable member, I'm pleased to give him the answer that I've given to him in this House and in scrums repeatedly, which is that our plans for comprehensive reform to Ontario's long-term-care sector certainly include additional resources.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr Hampton: To the Minister of Health, again: If we do the math, it's \$6,000 per person. There are 70,000 seniors now living in our homes for the aged and our nursing homes. That works out to \$420 million a year. So I want to ask the minister—you've got a budget coming up—are we going to see an increase of \$420 million a year for long-term care so that our seniors can live in dignity, so they can get more than one shower a week, so they can have a food allowance of more than \$5.24 a day? Is that going to happen in this budget, or will it be another broken promise by your government?

Hon Mr Smitherman: What I'm pleased to tell the honourable member is that the budget our government will bring down will reflect the realities of Ontario and the needs of protecting those who are most vulnerable. Our government will continue to ensure that our health care system deals with them appropriately and in a compassionate way.

With respect to the work that we're going to do in our long-term-care facilities, it will be comprehensive. It will be focused on resources, standards and transparency. At the end of the day, it will deliver the necessary reforms to ensure the quality of these centres, because our most vulnerable residents are located there.

Mr Hampton: Minister, the answer you just gave sounds like the kind of answer the Conservatives used to give. They used to talk about "the realities of the province." Well, the reality seven months ago in the election campaign was that you said this was all doable. You said this was your commitment. You said to people, "Choose change." We read every day of seniors being abused. We read every day of seniors who are suffering from Alzheimer's; 50% of the residents in long-term-care facilities suffer from Alzheimer's and only 6% get any kind of mental health resources.

A very specific question, Minister: Before the election you had no problem making this promise. Tell us that in the budget we are going to see there will be \$420 million in additional dollars to look after our seniors in dignity. Will we see that, yes or no?

Hon Mr Smitherman: What I'm proud to say is that the party I'm a representative of is a party that will, over

the course of our term, ensure a higher quality in standards in our long-term-care facilities, and in short order we will move forward on that across the 67,500 beds in our long-term-care facilities. We will improve the standards. We will improve nutrition. We will improve the care that people receive there.

What we will also do, which is long overdue—it wasn't done by them when they were in government nor by them—is shine a bright light of transparency and accountability on the operations of these facilities so that Ontarians have the opportunity across indicators that very clearly tell us how we are doing in relation to those standards—we will make that information available and public so that people are no longer left in any doubt about the quality of care that is provided in these long-term-care settings.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): To the Minister of the Environment: Every year Ontario trucks a million tonnes of garbage to Michigan. That's 125 tractor trailers a day. Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm is concerned. She is concerned about Toronto's poor record on recycling. We're all concerned about border security post 9/11. Minister, what will you do if Michigan closes the border to Toronto's trash?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I'm very happy to advise the member opposite. Obviously he doesn't read the papers; it's been well covered. We do have a plan to assist municipalities in Ontario, and that is to assist them to meet a 60% diversion goal. As recently as yesterday I had a conversation with the mayor of the city of Toronto. Mayor Miller is confident the city will be able to meet the new standard set by Michigan. Also, the mayor of Toronto is very willing to assist this government to work toward a 60% diversion goal.

Mr Barrett: Minister, obviously you don't have a plan. You're shutting down the Adams mine option. We just heard that garbage is not going back to Keele, and now the Premier is musing about opening new landfills in Ontario. You've introduced the No Landfill in a Liberal Riding Act, succumbing to not in my backyard, the NIMBY pressure, and hence you've set back environmental disposable management by 30 years. Does this mean that garbage will never be sent to your backyard, that it will never be sent to David Ramsay's backyard? Exactly whose backyard are you looking at for these new landfills in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: This government is actually going to fix the problem that was created by the previous government. They tinkered with the Environmental Assessment Act, and as a result of that tinkering, it takes between eight and 12 years to site a landfill in this province.

Our government recognizes that landfills are a reality of municipal solid waste management. I just want to read a few comments I have received from groups that actu-

ally have the responsibility of dealing with municipal solid waste. The Recycling Council of Ontario has indicated that they are delighted this government is looking outside the blue box to find opportunities to divert waste away from landfills.

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The city of Toronto has indicated that it welcomes the provincial government's waste action plan. This announcement demonstrates that the government has listened and is responding by providing municipalities with the necessary tools to manage and divert their waste responsibly. So, obviously, we have some very good support from the people who actually have the responsibility of managing municipal solid waste. We are going to improve the environmental assessment and approvals process so we can actually site the facilities in a more timely way to meet the needs of the municipalities in our province, as well as assist them in building diversion capacity, green bin capacity, which the city of Toronto is already an example for in the province of Ontario.

HOME CARE

Mr Vic Dhillon (Brampton West-Mississauga): My question is directed to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Peel Senior Link is a not-for-profit neighbourhood organization which has been helping seniors remain independent and in their homes with dignity for as long as possible. They serve over 1,000 seniors who would otherwise need to enter long-term-care facilities. Eight years of Tory government has seen support for important services such as these badly eroded. The shift from institutions to the community has deeply affected the seniors in my riding. Groups like Peel Senior Link have had to pick up the slack for this off-loading of services without any proportional increase in funding.

In the recent election campaign, we maintained that if Ontarians required care and wanted it in their home, and if care costs less than receiving it in the hospital or a nursing home, they should get it. This privilege was very welcome news for seniors and signalled our commitment to a government that worked with seniors and care providers for the first time in a decade. Minister, could you please tell us the status of our home care initiatives which are so badly needed by seniors across Ontario?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): In response to the excellent question by the member for Brampton, I'm pleased to say that our government believes that the best kind of health care is the health care that's available closest to home. Ideally, if that health care can be delivered in the home in a fashion that allows the person to stay there, then that's ideal. The challenge for our government is to make those investments in the necessary, complementary, community-based care and take some of the pressure off the hospitals that have, for too long now, been asked to do too much.

I'm pleased to tell the member and all members that our government sees home care as an enormously im-

portant priority, and to expect that we will be able to expand programs with a view toward enhancing the independence of our seniors and taking pressure off the institutions which have been asked to carry too much of the burden for too long.

Mr Dhillon: As Peel Senior Link points out, support for community care groups as required goes above and beyond home care initiatives. Could you please provide the Legislature with some details concerning our commitment to working with the community support sector to ensure that seniors have the access and the assistance they need to remain healthy and independent?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The nature of the programming that is provided works both with respect to home-making, assisting people with things that they need and can't take care of in their home, and also, being able to use our home care services to focus on things like post-acute stays—in other words, people who are being sent home from hospitals. In the case of the Ottawa Hospital, we've seen a study where too many people are being readmitted because of an inadequacy of post-acute care. That will be a priority area for us, as will mental health-related home care and palliative and end-of-life care. These are all important areas for priority reinvestment. I'd like to thank the honourable member and all members for the work that they do in supporting the community-based organizations that play such an incredibly important role in the delivery of health care services across Ontario.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services and it concerns the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program. This program is intended to help all children reach their full potential by ensuring that they get the best possible start in life. The House may recall that I brought forward a private member's resolution highlighting the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program in the spring of 1998. My resolution passed with the unanimous support of the House and was embraced by the health minister of the day, the member for Kitchener-Waterloo. Later that spring, the provincial government responded in its 1998 budget, making a commitment to raise funding for this program fivefold for a period of years.

Recently, Waterloo regional council approached me with the news that the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program may be scaled back. The region may be compelled to cut six full-time employees because of the way resources are being allocated by the Ministry of Health. This means families in my riding will receive less service. I ask the minister: Is she concerned about this funding issue and the resulting loss of service that my constituents will suffer, and what is she prepared to do about it?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and

Immigration): I'd like to thank the honourable member for the question. Indeed, the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program has been transferred to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services as of last Thursday, and we are very supportive of this program.

For the year 2003-04, we spent \$72.9 million for this program. I will look into your question more closely, but I am telling you that we are committed to this program. The initial evaluations have shown that babies and children, having gone through this program, do better on measures of gross motor, fine motor and language development, and we are undergoing another evaluation now to see the long-term effects in junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten.

Mr Arnott: I appreciate the minister's willingness to respond and her expression of support for the program, but she needs to know that, even though the ministry's attempts to crunch dollars and shift resources away from Healthy Babies, Healthy Children may seem acceptable to her government, the social and economic costs down the road would far outweigh any short-term savings today. Second, it would be a disgrace to learn that the first major reduction in this service for children happened because the Liberals have taken a political approach and have started to starve it of resources simply because it was introduced by the previous government.

I suspect that the minister knows that with fewer service providers, fewer children will receive the service they need and, in turn, achieve success. The children not assisted by the government run the risk of needing more intensive and expensive programs and services later in life. So I ask the minister, will she take action not only to prevent the elimination of these staff positions, but will she agree to Waterloo region's request for full funding to deliver the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program at the required level of service for Waterloo region and across the province?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: I'd like to thank the member for the supplementary. I will look into that particular situation. I can tell you that we have no plans of cutting back on this service, because it's exactly the kind of programming that we believe in on this side of the House: preventive measures which, in the long run, not only save money but are the right things to do for children and families.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Children's mental health services have suffered greatly because of years of inadequate funding coupled with increasing demand. St Clair Child and Youth Services in my riding is one such agency that has to reduce crucial children's services in order to deal with continuous underfunding. Minister, what are we doing to help out these agencies who are on the front lines in terms of children's mental health services in this province?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I'd like to thank my colleague from Sarnia for the question. Indeed, this is an area that is badly in need of repair. It has been neglected for the last 12 years. It's one of my personal priorities to improve children's mental health in this province. What the experts are telling us is, yes, money is one issue, but another, just as important, issue is a reconfiguration of the system. My ministry is working very hard and we are in the planning process of fixing this mess.

Ms Di Cocco: Thank you, Minister, for your commitment. St Clair Child and Youth Services is the only agency of its kind in my riding that deals with preventive care for high-risk children. As I said in the previous question, it's being forced to cut back on those services. Minister, what can we say to those working on the front lines in agencies like St Clair Child and Youth Services who have told me that they're hanging on by their fingernails, and to the families of these children who continue to need these services?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: Again, I'd like to thank my colleague and I would like to tell the people working at St Clair Child and Youth Services and the families that the member from Sarnia-Lambton has been relentless in talking to me about this issue. I understand it is a huge issue.

There are all sorts of complexities to this one. The lack of coordination and integration is one reason why we created the children and youth ministry, in order to better integrate and better coordinate the services out there, across ministries, across the education system. We are busily doing that. I can assure the member that we're working as fast as we can.

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MEDICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Minister of Health: Earlier today you said that the government does intend to review the medical review committee audit process. This is a Canadian Press story I just obtained. You further said, "The commitments that we've made"—you made—"with respect to the MRC are commitments that we intend to fulfill."

Let me remind you of what those commitments are. The Premier said, when he met with doctors in Niagara a year ago, "that all audits must be frozen until that review" of the MRC audit process "is complete." In fact, your seatmate, the member for Windsor West, reinforcing that by way of her own commitment, said that "until the review is complete, we believe that all audits should be frozen."

It has been six months now. There has been neither a review commenced nor audits frozen. Doctors continue to be persecuted. Why are you breaking that promise?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The member will well know where

we're at on this, because I've taken the opportunity over the past several hours to keep him well-informed.

What I'm pleased to tell the House is that today our government is announcing that the distinguished retired Supreme Court justice, Peter Cory, an international jurist of some extraordinary reputation, has agreed to conduct a review of the MRC process and get on with that almost immediately.

Mr Kormos: Well, you see, the problem is that the promise was to freeze, to suspend, to put a moratorium on all audits. It was a very clear promise made by the Premier—

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): By the former health critic.

Mr Kormos: —made by the former health critic, made by every Liberal candidate across this province in the course of the election campaign, when the matter was put to them.

Doctors continue to be persecuted, to come under attack by an audit process that is arbitrary, that is fundamentally unfair, that took the life of Dr Anthony Hsu a year ago and continues to condemn doctors in this province. You made a promise to freeze, to suspend, to place a moratorium on the audits until the review was completed. You're going to commence a review; why aren't you going to keep your promise to suspend, freeze, put a moratorium on audits until that review is completed?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I would like to inform the member, indeed all members, that earlier today I had the opportunity to speak with that gentleman's widow. I explained to her that our government's priority was to get on with the review and that upon review of the challenge of trying to bring in a freeze or a moratorium, it was found that legislation would be required to do that.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Smitherman: Instead, we have committed to engage Mr Justice Cory, a distinguished jurist, to ask him to do his work on an expedited basis.

I agree, based on the heckling that I'm hearing, that there would be the opportunity, I would hope, for speedy passage of any legislative changes that are necessary as a result of the work of Mr Justice Cory.

NURSES

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is also for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. With each passing day, we discover that your words about increasing access to services and health care providers in this province are simply that: They are words. There are no actions.

We've just heard from my colleague that the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program is losing some of its funding. Yesterday, when I asked you to commit \$6,000 to residents in long-term-care facilities, you refused to do so. In fact, we learned yesterday that you actually were clawing back \$15 million in property taxes. So the level of service for our seniors, our frail, our elderly, is decreasing, as is the level of care.

Well, today I have a copy of a letter from the Lake of the Woods District Hospital in Kenora, a hospital that you know is facing a pending crisis in nursing human resources. Despite your promise to hire 8,000 more nurses, and \$50 million, you have not done so. Why is this hospital and 127 other hospitals not getting money for more nurses?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I find it rather remarkable that that woman, who was for a very lengthy period—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Smitherman: I'm sorry. I meant no offence. If there was any, I apologize—that member who for 30 months served as the Minister of Health in this province, who during her day had \$400 million targeted toward an initiative to improve the percentages of full-time nursing and achieved little or next to no improvement whatsoever, could stand and lecture me about the nursing agenda in this province.

We targeted resources to hospitals at the end of the fiscal year, to the 33 largest hospitals, because it was the expert advice of nursing officials that that was the best opportunity to get immediate results. The immediate results are being proven in those 33 hospitals, where nurses every single day are being given full-time opportunities that they did not have before. This government is committed to restoring the foundations of nursing in this province. We will rebuild nursing.

That member's leader, when he was Premier, looked across at nurses and said that they're Hula Hoops, that they're redundant. For you to stand in this place and try to take—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

Mrs Witmer: I would have to say I am very disappointed in the rhetoric. The member knows full well that I set up a nursing task force. We implemented every recommendation. We put forward \$385 million and created 12,000 nursing positions. Methinks that the minister doth protest too much. Roy Romanow said that in Canada there are too many people living in remote areas who suffer because they don't have access to nurses or doctors, just like the people up in the Lake of the Woods, in Kenora. He said that incentives should be offered to attract nurses to communities.

I ask you, why will you not restore the nursing incentive program which we put in place and which would go a long way to help underserved communities recruit much-needed nurses? Why aren't you taking the steps that we started?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member believes that talk is something that started. When I arrived at the Ministry of Health to see the program that she is referencing in her question, what did I find? I found a program that was highlighted on a Web site but had never been enacted. The commitment that I make to that member and the commitment that I make to nurses in this province, who would be willing to go and work in remote places, is that our government's plans, as we move forward very shortly, will clearly demonstrate that

we believe incentives are one part of a package of rebuilding the foundations of nursing in this province.

I really would encourage the honourable member to remember the days when she was the Minister of Health. Look back on your \$385 million, and then look at the state of nursing when your government left office on October 2. Here is what I'm pleased to offer as the challenge—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Mr Smitherman: When I've been in the job 30 months I'll be very happy to compare it to your 30 months in the job, because nurses in this province understand today that they have an advocate, and that they have a Premier who will never refer to them as redundant and will never suggest that they are as out of fashion as a Hula Hoop.

POVERTY

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I think this minister should ask the next question. I have a question for the Minister of Community and Social Services. The recent report on poverty by the United Way shows a dramatic increase of poverty in Toronto.

Interjections.

Mr Ruprecht: Mr Speaker, if I can get my question in, it would be great. I was referring to the most recent report on poverty by the United Way. The research they indicate is indeed very disturbing. The number of neighbourhoods where more than one quarter of the families live in poverty has doubled since 1981.

The United Way makes some specific recommendations that include investing in affordable housing, raising the minimum wage, helping new immigrants with re-training and investing in programs for youth. What action is our government going to take on this most pressing issue of poverty?

1450

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): Thank you so much to our member for that question. We realize that Toronto is struggling on a number of fronts in confronting poverty issues in the city of Toronto. In fact, three ministers from the McGuinty government, along with the mayor of Toronto, appeared at a summit not long ago. That summit was on homelessness, but many of these same issues arose. On that day our minister for infrastructure announced the first in a long series of announcements around creating affordable housing in Ontario. That was the first for many years in this province, where we're actually moving toward sustainable growth in affordable housing, a \$56-million announcement on that day.

In addition, our minister responsible for universities and colleges has moved forward with a \$4-million plan over the next couple of years to integrate our new Canadians and allow them to continue working in the work and in the career they brought with them to this

country. On a number of fronts, we experience difficulties. Our government is prepared to address them.

Mr Ruprecht: Let me point out another very disturbing fact. That is the dramatic increase in the number of visible minorities who are poor. In 1981, visible minority families accounted for just 37.4% of the total of poor families. By 2001, their numbers had risen to 77.5%. We must not lose our caring, multicultural society where opportunities are open to all. What specific steps are you prepared to take in order to preserve our city as a place where everyone has a chance to break out of this cycle of extreme poverty?

Hon Ms Pupatello: The members probably realize that this government understands a multi-prong approach across several ministries. Our government is committed to raise rates of social assistance and ODSP. We will be delivering on that promise. For many of those who live at or below the poverty line, this will be a significant step forward.

Let me mention too our Minister of Labour, who announced for the first time in years a raise to the minimum wage, which will significantly assist those people who are living at or below the poverty line. Let's go further than that. The last government enacted policies to education that stopped the use of schools as community hubs and community centres. This government will be reversing that. Our Minister of Education will take schools and put them back in the centre of communities, in particular in those areas of Toronto that are of most concern.

We appreciate that all our ministers have to come together for solutions. We will be pleased in April to be working with the mayor of Toronto again on a summit he is bringing together on affordable housing.

AGRICULTURAL POLICY FRAMEWORK

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Myself and the farmers of Ontario were very pleased to hear you've extended the deadline for farmers to make their contributions to the Canadian agricultural income stabilization program from the end of April to the end of June. Obviously both you and I have attended the information meetings on the CAIS program.

We all know that farmers are very concerned about some of the aspects of the program, beyond the fact that it's very difficult to understand some of the program or the information, such as I went to. I came out thinking I knew less leaving the meeting than I knew when I was going in. So it's a very difficult program to understand.

While I'm sure farmers are somewhat relieved to have a meagre deadline extension, can you explain why we were the last province to extend the deadline and why we didn't see fit to extend it to the federal deadline of December 31?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): When this government moved forward with the signing of the Agricultural Policy Framework in Decem-

ber 2003, we moved forward in consultation with the agricultural community, unlike many steps the previous government had taken of just acting unilaterally, without consultation. We worked very closely with the Ontario Agricultural Commodity Council to make sure that before Ontario signed on with the federal government, this was a program that was going to work for Ontario. The green light was given from the agricultural commodity council.

One of the issues the member raises was that we were able to negotiate an annual review of the program. We know this is a new program and we want to find out how this program works. The annual review is going to give us that opportunity. The deadline: We wanted to encourage as many people to sign up as early as possible, because this is a program that is going to help farmers for many years into the future. The deadline extension was granted as a request of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Mr Hardeman: Now that safety net funds flow through the CAIS program, can you ensure farmers that it's a good deal?

I just want to correct the record, Mr Speaker. The minister suggested that the previous government wasn't working with the agricultural community to sign the agricultural policy framework implementation agreement that the minister signed one day before the federal minister left office. I want to point out that the reason Helen Johns, the minister of the day, did not sign the agreement was because the total farm community said, "Don't sign the agreement, because it's not a good deal for Ontario's farmers." We saw no changes, or very minimal changes, made in the agreement when this minister decided to sign it on behalf of the farmers, against the wishes of the farm community. I think it's inappropriate for the minister to suggest that we did not consult with the farmers and that he did.

Many farmers are concerned that the new program is designed to reduce the government's investment in agriculture. Can you assure this House and the farmers of Ontario that in the upcoming provincial budget, investment into the safety net program for Ontario farmers will not be less than the money paid out this year to Ontario's farm community?

Hon Mr Peters: I would really encourage the member to stand up and speak to John Gillespie, the chairman of the Ontario Agricultural Commodity Council, and challenge John Gillespie that they didn't give the green light for this to move forward. We did consult with the agricultural community and we're going to continue to consult with the agricultural community—

Mr Hardeman: They didn't want it.

Hon Mr Peters: I'd like to know who didn't want it. Mr Speaker, my apologies.

Starting this evening and throughout tomorrow, the federal-provincial-territorial ministers are meeting, and one of the items on the agenda is the agricultural policy framework. We want to make sure there's a program that works and is in the best interests of the farmers of Ontario.

This government has made the commitment to the wedge funding, to make sure that the three-year transition takes place in support of the agricultural community. We've also offered those assurances to the agricultural community that those companion programs that are in place, such as the self-directed risk management program for the horticultural industry or the market revenue insurance program, are programs in transition. We're going to work with the agricultural community to transition those programs to new programs that work in the best interests of Ontario farmers.

GREENBELT STRATEGY

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Since being elected to this assembly, I have been approached by numerous recreational facility operators and landowners with applications and interest in recreational facilities that have been impacted under the Oak Ridges moraine legislation and/or the current zoning freeze, which is part of the proposed greenbelt strategy. The greenbelt strategy will be part of the urban shadow for millions of Ontarians.

Minister, I can give you a very specific example of a ski hill operator who wants to enhance their facilities to make the property usable year-round, of new applications for golf driving ranges, and interest by community organizations in establishing sports fields. Will there be significant opportunities for active recreational pursuits as part of the greenbelt strategy? If so, how will this be encouraged?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I know the member has a great interest in this matter. The greenbelt legislation is all about responsible economic growth. The sprawl we currently have is about bad economic growth and bad economic policy. Clear limits on development will protect the greenbelt for the long term and ensure that development is directed into those areas where services are actually planned.

The Greenbelt Task Force that was appointed approximately six weeks ago has been meeting on a weekly basis in order to set out and determine the criteria and make recommendations in that regard. They are looking at the kinds of issues the member has raised here today. I'm sure when they're ready to report some time in the middle of June of this year, there will be policies recommended by them that will not only be good for the overall greenbelt but will also be good for the individual operators in the area.

1500

Mr Arthurs: Minister, my supplementary question: At the end of the day, with the establishment of a greenbelt commission or similar body, will it have independent authority? In other words, will it be empowered not only to manage but to take specific action on the broad range of interests of the millions of Ontarians who will use that greenbelt?

Hon Mr Gerretsen: That, of course, is a major area of concern as well. The task force will also be making recommendations with respect to the kind of governance model that we want for the future. There are different models possible. We could be looking at the Niagara Escarpment model, we could be looking at the Oak Ridges moraine model, or other models that will have, as a main purpose, the protection of the greenbelt area. The development industry wants to know where it can develop and the environmental community wants to know what's going to be environmentally protected. That's the main criteria of the task force currently, and that's the main criteria of the greenbelt legislation in general. People want to know where development can take place and what will be protected for generations to come.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Health. Is your government going to pay 85% of the capital costs of reconstruction at the Sudbury Regional Hospital? Yes or no?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): What I've indicated to the people of Sudbury—we had a terrific summit a week ago, last Monday night. I think that has been widely reported in the member's media. I made the comment that I felt very strongly that, as it relates to the Sudbury hospital and the Thunder Bay Regional Hospital as well, a strong case has been made to take a look at the contribution level of the provincial government. I further told the member's community, the representatives from the hospital and the voluntary board leadership that we would be back in the Sudbury community in a period of four to eight weeks from then to very specifically announce what funding arrangements we were able to come to. I would tell the member that I look forward to seeing her at that event.

Ms Martel: Minister, it wasn't a trick question. It's not a difficult question, but it's a question that's very important for our community because, you see, your colleague the Minister of Northern Development and Mines was very clear before and during the election. He insisted that the provincial government should pay for 85% of the capital costs of reconstruction at the Sudbury Regional Hospital. You're the government now. This important decision, this election promise, is in your hands now. I ask you again: Is your government going to pay 85% of the costs of capital reconstruction at the Sudbury Regional Hospital? Yes or no?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I'm pleased to join with the honourable member in recognizing the championing efforts of the now Minister of Northern Development. The results of the summit clearly indicated to the people of Sudbury that the Sudbury Regional Hospital does reflect on the function of the health care system in northeastern Ontario—a very significant element. What I'm pleased to tell the honourable member is that the hospital in Sudbury and the hospital in Thunder Bay, as a

result of the interventions of this government, and in particular of that minister, enjoy a much brighter future than they ever have.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): My question today is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. I've risen in the House because many times the minister, when we've drawn her attention to the tuition freeze and the impact it would have on the colleges and universities, has stated in her responses that it's going to be good news for colleges and universities. Can you share that good news with us today?

Hon Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'm really pleased to have the interest of the member for Haliburton-Victoria-Brock. This is new interest from this previous government, given what they have done to undermine the post-secondary education system. You only have to wait another day.

Ms Scott: I'd like to draw attention to the over 135,000 spaces that were created in colleges and universities by this government. There is speculation running rampant that you're going to short-change the colleges and universities. Can you assure the colleges and universities today that they will receive full compensation for the money they have lost because of the tuition freeze?

Hon Mrs Chambers: This is a very interesting situation. I'm being questioned by a member of a party that added 137% to the tuition fees that students were paying in colleges and universities, a government that cut student funding by half, and a government that removed \$400 million in operating funding in—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. Could I have the minister respond without the noise that's coming from the opposition?

Hon Mrs Chambers: Let me repeat what I said before. This is a very interesting situation. The member opposite is speaking to a post-secondary education sector that was cut by her government by \$400 million in 1997 alone. Student aid was cut by half. Tuition fees over the last 10 years were increased by 137%. I cannot imagine why they're suddenly so interested, but do you know what? They'll find out the answer to the question tomorrow.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. Last week you announced your ministry's plan for energy conservation within the Ontario public service. Last week in the House members of the opposition accused your ministry of making a reannouncement on the government energy conservation plan. Can you assure all members that last week's announcement was the announcement of a new and aggressive energy conservation plan brought forth by this government to further reduce our energy consumption?

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Indeed, it is a new program. The previous government may have talked about things, but we actually are going to do them. The target of the 10% reduction is a new target starting from now. It will mean that the province of Ontario will use about 62 million kilowatt hours less per year.

It will require some capital investment in lighting refits, in automatic programs to shut off our lights, in fixing our heating systems. All these things were not invested in over the last few years. It does require an investment, but it will result in substantial savings of electricity and electricity expenditures.

So I can assure the member from Ottawa-Orléans that it is a new target of 10% and we have a new program to make certain that we in fact deliver on this commitment once again.

Mr McNeely: Can you tell me about any projects that are taking place in the Ottawa area?

Hon Mr Phillips: We are investing in several projects in the Ottawa area. I might say again to the public that these are challenging economic times in terms of dealing with our fiscal situation. We are allocating a high priority on the budget that we have for what's called the Ontario Realty Corp for the maintenance in our buildings. We are putting a first priority on energy saving. Several of the major projects will indeed be in the Ottawa area—several million dollars of investment there—all designed to cut our energy use by 10%, to save well over \$5 million a year in energy costs for the province of Ontario and to help lead by example.

Our Premier and the Minister of Energy have said that we are going to create a conservation culture in the province of Ontario. I think the people of Ontario will expect that their government would lead by example, and indeed we are, right across the province.

1510

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I have a question to the Attorney General. I'm sure the Attorney General is aware of the \$1-billion-plus boondoggle at the federal level called the long gun registry. We know that seven provincial governments in this country, and the territories as well, have indicated they will not prosecute charges laid under the long gun registry. This government, through the Attorney General, has yet to indicate its position with respect to prosecutions. Will the minister stand in his place today and indicate that he will join with the six other provinces and the territories across this country and ensure law-abiding Ontarians that this new government will not prosecute under the long gun registry?

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I thank the member for his question. In fact, it turns out that when you were a government minister, police and prosecutors would use

violations of the gun registry laws, not against farmers and hunters, but in the context of organized crime, in the context of biker gangs. That's what your government did. At the same time, as I think the member knows, the federal government, the Martin government, has indicated they are going to be reviewing the gun registry and they will be coming forward with recommendations on that. We look forward to that.

But we will continue to prosecute offences to the full extent of the law, in the same way the previous government used that law to do so. We also look forward to whatever recommendations or changes might be made to the gun registry and, when we see them, we'll come forward with announcements on whatever changes we might make on the prosecution side.

PETITIONS

TILLSONBURG DISTRICT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition signed by some 1,600 people in my community. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital has asked for ministerial consent to make capital changes to its facility to accommodate the placement of a satellite dialysis unit; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has already given approval for the unit and committed operational dollars to it; and

"Whereas the community has already raised the funds for the equipment needed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care give his final approval of the capital request change from the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital immediately, so those who are in need of these life-sustaining dialysis services can receive them locally, thereby enjoying a better quality of life without further delay."

I add my signature to this petition, as I totally agree with it.

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL PARKWAY

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): This is a petition that's written to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Alexander Graham Bell, renowned inventor of society-altering technological inventions, such as the telephone, greatly revolutionized the daily lives of people in Ontario, Canada and" indeed "the world; and

"Whereas Alexander Graham Bell's contribution to science, technology and society as a whole, were in part developed and tested while he lived in Brantford, Ontario; and

"Whereas Brantford lies at the heart of the section of Highway 403 which runs from Woodstock to Burlington;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To adopt and pass into law Dave Levac's private member's bill, Bill 44, the Alexander Graham Bell Parkway Act, renaming Highway 403 between Woodstock and Burlington as a tribute to this great inventor" and Canadian.

I give my petition to Sarah and I sign my name to it.

WATER SERVICES

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of the constituents of the riding of Durham:

"Whereas the riding of Durham is made up of many small communities such as Hampton, Tyrone, Blackstock, Newtonville, Kendal, Greenbank, Prince Albert, Epsom and" many "others; and

"Whereas not all citizens live in larger cities such as Toronto, where access to municipal water service is taken for granted; and

"Whereas smaller communities have little, if any, access to municipal water services; and

"Whereas Ontario's smaller villages and hamlets are home to many community buildings such as churches, community halls and arenas; and

"Whereas those responsible for halls, churches, arenas and other community facilities take pride in ensuring these buildings have access to the highest quality potable water; and

"Whereas churches, community halls and arenas are at the heart of rural communities and it is important that they remain open to the public" and to the community, "with full services available;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario" as follows:

"That the implementation of regulation 170/03 as it relates to community halls and similar facilities be delayed; and

"That fair and open reviews of the regulation be conducted with respect to its impact on" rural community hall facilities; and

"That the province of Ontario ensure halls, churches, arenas and other public facilities on private wells comply with water safety standards that are reasonable and appropriate."

I am pleased to support this and my constituents of the riding of Durham.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Sudbury Regional Hospital is a regional referral centre, serving patients from across northeastern Ontario;

"Whereas the burden of raising money to pay the local share of the hospital reconstruction ... has fallen primarily onto local residents;

"Whereas city council and local residents have already committed more money to the project than we were required to;

"Whereas imposing a private mortgage scheme on the hospital to pay more costs at the local level would be disastrous for patients, hospital programs and staff;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the Liberal government to fund 85% of the capital costs of reconstruction at the Sudbury Regional Hospital."

I agree with the petitioners. I've affixed my signature to this.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition to present. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the most vulnerable individuals in our society deserve to be treated with respect and dignity;

"Whereas the previous government ignored the poor in order to pay for irresponsible tax cuts for the wealthy; and

"Whereas barriers need to be removed in order to ensure full participation from Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to introduce a cost-of-living increase to the ODSP program as soon as possible, and to legislate changes that will ensure Ontarians with disabilities can participate fully in a stronger Ontario."

I agree with the petition and affix my signature to it.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from Fitzroy Harbour, Lanark Highlands township and Mississippi Mills township in Lanark county:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty stated clearly in his election platform that he is committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors and has more recently said he is considering breaking this pledge by reducing coverage for seniors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government fulfill its promise and start standing up for seniors by protecting the Ontario drug benefit program and the vital assistance it provides to those who require prescription medications."

I have signed that.

NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Canada, are eager to see our health care system strengthened and the health care choice made available to all who live in Ontario ... implore the Legislative Assembly for the province of Ontario, its ministers and its members, to use their offices to immediately amend the Regulated Health Professions Act ... to permit registered nurses to take" direction "from naturopathic doctors in order to act effectively as a medical team and provide the care and treatments those health professionals and their patients feel are appropriate and necessary.

"At present, our rights to choose our own medical services delivered by a trained, competent and professional nursing staff is threatened by the outdated and narrow interpretation of" what constitutes "a 'health professional.' At this point in time, the Regulated Health Professions Act excludes regulated, well-trained and licensed naturopathic doctors, and in turn limits a naturopathic doctor's ability to order treatments that should be administered by well-trained" personnel, including "licensed registered nurses.

"The Ontario College of Nurses is at present adjudicating against two registered nurses for their participation in the delivery of health care needs and is using the Regulated Health Professions Act as a basis in their allegations. We find these actions to be abhorrent and draconian, and we therefore petition this honourable body to act with speed and clarity to amend all legislation to represent the right of choice for the patient in their selection of medical treatment, and the right of patients to expect their treatment be administered by trained, competent and appropriately regulated health care professionals. This situation has come about due to 13 years of neglect on behalf of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, and in particular, the ministers of health, in addressing the incorporation of naturopathic doctors into the Regulated Health Professions Act;

"We, your constituents, would like naturopathic medicine to be regulated under the RHPA without delay." That is the basis of this petition today.

"Please don't abandon us in our time of need."

I present that on behalf of some 60 or so constituents who have affixed their signature.

1520

SEWAGE SLUDGE

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I have a petition that was sent to me by the town of Wasaga Beach.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the residents Wasaga Beach, wish to bring forth our concerns regarding the transfer of approximately 5,700 tonnes of 14-year-old sludge, which

contains metals from the North Simcoe transfer station, to our recently closed landfill site. To date, there are no EBR requirements for hauled sewage.

"Due to this and the geography of the Wasaga Beach site being so close to the longest freshwater beach in the world and other sensitive areas, there exists a threat to the environment and the public's health. The questionable product should be moved to a desolate location. Once damaged, the environment and people cannot be replaced;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: To stop the sludge from being transferred to Wasaga Beach."

I thank the town and the clerk, Eric Collingwood, for sending me that petition. It's several dozens of pages long, signed by hundreds of people. As a resident of Wasaga Beach myself, I'm very happy to sign this.

TUITION

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition from the Canadian Federation of Students. This one comes from the student association, Fédération Canadienne des Étudiantes et Étudiants, from George Brown College and it reads as follows:

"Whereas average tuition fees in Ontario are the second-highest in Canada; and

"Whereas average undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have more than doubled in the past 10 years; and

"Whereas tuition fees for deregulated programs have, in certain cases, doubled and tripled; and

"Whereas Statistics Canada has documented a link between increasing tuition fees and diminishing access to post-secondary education; and

"Whereas four other provincial governments have taken a leadership role by freezing and reducing tuition fees;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Freeze tuition fees for all programs at their current levels; and

"Take steps to reduce the tuition fees of all graduate programs, post-diploma programs and professional programs for which tuition fees have been deregulated since 1998."

Since I agree—

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Sign it, Tony.

Mr Ruprecht: Yes, the member is correct. I will sign it and I will pass it on to the page to give to you, Mr Speaker.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, on behalf of the people of the riding of Durham.

"Whereas the Oak Ridges moraine is an ecological treasure that warrants protection and careful stewardship now and in future generations;

"Whereas the province of Ontario has recognized the importance of the moraine with the passage of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001, to protect natural and water resources, preserve agricultural lands and provide clarity on where development can and cannot occur;

"Whereas the act has resulted in certain limitations on citizens' use of their property within the moraine;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario take action to ensure there are no undue restrictions on Oak Ridges moraine residents making minor improvements to their homes and property; and

"That the province of Ontario work together with municipalities and land owners to ensure the interpretation and enforcement of the act continues to fully protect the moraine while also giving residents the right to fair and reasonable enjoyment of their property."

I am pleased to endorse and sign this petition on their behalf.

CORMORANTS

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a great number of petitions.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources continues to study the impact of cormorants and possible management strategies without examining a managed cull; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources has committed to experimental control of cormorants at specific sites; and

"Whereas cormorant populations in the Great Lakes basin have increased to 450,000 over the past several years, are continuing to grow, and are significantly depleting fish stocks; and

"Whereas numerous scientific studies have clearly documented the serious negative impact on fish populations and habitats in the Great Lakes basin; and

"Whereas cormorant populations are no longer in need of special protection;

"Therefore be it resolved that we petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"(1) immediately begin to significantly reduce cormorant populations in areas where they are having a demonstrably negative impact on local fisheries through managed culls;

"(2) make public the results of all Ministry of Natural Resources science assessing the impact of cormorants;

"(3) remove the special protected status on cormorants and treat them the same as crows, as identified in the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act."

I'll present these. I have signed the petition, and I give them to Mason to present to the table.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government has said in their election platform that they're committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors and are now considering de-listing drugs and imposing user fees on seniors;

"We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To halt the consideration of imposing an income test, de-listing drugs for coverage under the Ontario drug benefit plan or putting in place user fees for seniors, and to maintain the present Ontario drug benefit plan for seniors to cover medications."

I am pleased to sign this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 22, 2004, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I rise today to speak on the motion in support of the adoption of the speech from the throne, this being my maiden speech in the House.

Applause.

Mrs Jeffrey: Thank you. Isaac Asimov wrote, "It is change, continuing change, inevitable change that is the dominant factor in society today. No sensible decision can be made any longer without taking into account not only the world as it is, but the world as it will be."

Mr Speaker, I failed to remember to tell you that I'm sharing my time with the member for Thornhill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): You can tell me at any time, but that's fine.

Mrs Jeffrey: Bramptonians, like all Ontarians, understand the need for change. They understand why, after eight years, it was time for change. This throne speech sets the stage for real, positive change. The constituents of Brampton Centre understand this, and they have sent me here with a mandate to fix our schools, protect medicare, and ensure clean air, safe water and properly inspected food. They also want me to make certain their money is spent wisely.

In the short time I have been here, I am proud to be part of a government that has acted decisively on the need for a new hospital in Brampton. A hospital is more than bricks and mortar. It is one of the most important institutions a community can build. When fully operational, the new hospital will add 65% more hospital

beds, double the number of operating rooms and add 1,500 staff, including 200 physicians.

The Premier and the Minister of Health are to be congratulated for their swift action on this issue. It is no coincidence that the honourable Bill Davis, in his maiden speech in 1960, talked about the need for a new hospital in Peel, and then called on the Minister of Health for assistance. Within a week of being sworn in, I was able to meet with Minister Smitherman, Brampton Mayor Susan Fennell, the member for Brampton West-Mississauga and the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale.

The minister recognized the need for immediate action and stated his intention at that meeting for a quick resolution. One month less a day after cabinet was sworn in, this government announced its intention to not only build a hospital, but to restructure the deal so that it is, and will always be, a publicly owned, publicly controlled and publicly accountable hospital.

Yet there is a small group, friends of the third party, who will stop at nothing to derail this vital project. They would rather we paid millions of taxpayers' dollars in penalties to cancel this hospital and turn back the clock. This is an irresponsible action that I will never support.

1530

They cannot accept the results of the election, where they made the hospital in Brampton their key issue. The people in Brampton Centre understand clearly the options available. They understood our position. They understood the third party's position, and they chose to have a publicly owned, publicly controlled and publicly accountable hospital.

The minister and his team restructured the previous government's contract to ensure that the hospital remains in public hands. The minister has done it in a way that ensures the project goes through and stays on schedule. For some, though, there is a refusal to accept the people's decision. They would rather we spend hundreds of thousands of dollars, actually millions of dollars, on costly and time-consuming court challenges—money that could hire more nurses, buy desperately needed medical equipment or reduce wait times in emergency rooms, not to mention the additional costs associated with delaying this project.

Our government will commit over a quarter of a billion dollars to this new hospital over the life of the project. It is a real and tangible commitment to the growing community of Brampton and Peel, and my community is doing its part in raising money for the new hospital. Over \$150 million needs to be raised before the doors open, and it will be.

A new hospital makes good economic sense. The economic development from such a project will have a significant impact throughout our community. From new jobs to new businesses to new housing, the hospital project will have an economic multiplier effect on Brampton and the surrounding communities. The new William Osler Health Centre will make an important contribution to Brampton, but also to our region and to

the province as a whole. I look forward to inviting members to the opening of this new facility.

Our second greatest challenge facing us is providing excellence for all in education. Our education system must serve its most important end, that being education and the preparation of our children, so that one day they will take our place as the heads of families, heads of businesses and heads of government. Our schools must stand as castles, strong, proud and majestic. Yet, in order to build a school that is to be a castle, it must be built on a strong foundation. That foundation is the unwavering commitment of our government and our commitment contained in our platform: Excellence for all.

In the recognition that education does not end in high school, we are committed to improving post-secondary education. Such steps have already been taken in my riding. In 2002, Sheridan's board of governors approved a new Davis campus plan that focuses on advanced manufacturing, allied health and justice, which fit well with the current economic and manufacturing priorities in the automotive, aerospace and food services, as well as telecommunication industries. Ensuring the success of students is one of my priorities and one of this government's. I look forward to working with the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities as well as the Minister of Finance to see how we can ensure a world-class system while responsibly managing our finances.

Like many of my colleagues here, I am a former municipal politician. Municipal politics is a great love of mine, and as the late US Speaker Tip O'Neill once said, "All politics is local." I share in that belief. I most definitely enjoyed serving the people of ward 2 in Brampton for the last 12 years as their city councillor. It never occurred to me to seek provincial office until the member for Vaughan-King-Aurora approached me and asked me to consider running for the position of MPP for Brampton Centre. I told him I wasn't interested and to please go away, "Please find someone else more suitable." Yet he was extremely persistent, and despite my refusal, returned many times over the next few months, just as enthusiastic as he was that very first time. I hate to admit it, but the member for Vaughan-King-Aurora was right, and I thank him for his persistence.

After 12 years of advocating on behalf of my constituents, I came to realize that nearly all the problems that affected my municipality were of a provincial nature. It has often been noted that municipalities are children of the province. Now, as the new member for Brampton Centre, I intend to help my constituents by getting things done here at Queen's Park. So I would like to thank the people of Brampton Centre for their confidence in me. I would like to thank my family and my supporters for their unwavering encouragement, and I would like to thank the Premier and the member for Vaughan-King-Aurora for their belief in me.

Brampton is a growing and vibrant community that continues to attract people from all over the world. From our roots in England 150 years ago, we now welcome people from Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, Europe and

the Middle East. Between the period of 1991 to 2001, the population of the city of Brampton increased by 91,000 people, or 39%. The rate of growth of Brampton consistently doubles, sometimes triples, the rate of growth in the GTA.

Brampton is at the crossroads of almost every major highway in the GTA. Highways 401, 403, 410, 407 and 10 either pass through my borders or border the community, bringing goods, services and people into and out of the city of Brampton. Because Highway 410 is vital to the economies of Brampton and surrounding areas, I am committed to seeing the expansion that has been promised by previous governments for so many years. In this respect, I am encouraged by the Minister of Transportation's recent remarks in the Legislature on this matter. I believe that the Highway 410 expansion is long overdue and its completion will significantly contribute to the economic growth of Brampton, Peel and this province.

Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I take great pride in being part of this Legislature. As Margaret Campbell, the trail-blazing Liberal member for St George-St David, noted, a woman's place is in this House. I am honoured to be the first woman to represent Brampton Centre. Our job is to help our children realize their potential. It is our job to provide assistance for those who face sickness and disease. It is our job to bring justice to those who have been wronged or harmed, and it is our job to help create opportunity for all. In short, it is our job to leave Ontario a better place than we found it. That is our task as legislators. This throne speech sets out to deal with these issues, and that is why I support it.

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I'm honoured to share the time with the member for Brampton Centre in making our maiden speech.

I am deeply honoured to be here in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario among my fellow members of the provincial Parliament. We have been given a duty by the people of this great province: to make the decisions which will affect their lives now and into the future. We are here, as individuals, to represent the views and opinions of our constituent ridings, and we are, as a body, to represent the hopes and needs of the province as a whole. May we never forget that responsibility.

I represent the riding of Thornhill and Concord, which was newly created in 1999. The riding includes parts of the town of Markham and the city of Vaughan but takes its name from the old village of Thornhill, which is located on both sides of Yonge Street immediately north of Steeles Avenue. Parts of the new riding of Thornhill have received very distinguished representation in the past: His Honour Alf Stong, currently a federal justice; the Honourable Don Cousens, now the mayor of the town of Markham; and the Honourable Greg Sorbara, now the Liberal finance minister of Ontario. I am honoured to have been chosen as the newest representative for the area and I promise to continue the high level of service to its residents that was delivered by its distinguished predecessors.

The riding takes its name from the village of Thornhill, which is named after Benjamin Thorne and was founded in 1794. It and surrounding communities grew slowly and steadily until the mid-1970s. Since then, the area has boomed, in terms of business and industry as well as population. Its population is now just under 140,000 people living in 40,000 houses, each with an average income of over \$85,000 per house per year. It is among the highest-educated ridings in the province, with 33% of the population having received a university education. There are over 100,000 jobs available in the riding, including high-tech jobs, skilled manufacturing positions, thousands of small and medium corporations, as well as many large national and multinational corporation headquarters. The riding can be described as one of new Canadians living side by side together with long-established residents, new cultures living next door to old settler families, and a wide range of religious and cultural beliefs co-existing in peace.

1540

Like many of my neighbours, I'm also an immigrant to Canada in search of a better life. Proud to have been accepted to this great country of Canada in Ontario, I and my fellow residents have taken on the responsibility of helping to build a community we all want to live in. We wish for safe, clean neighbourhoods. We wish for a proper education for our children. We wish for dependable health care, efficient infrastructure, and a good transportation system. We wish for good government.

I believe that Dalton McGuinty will deliver on all the issues that are important for Thornhill. For that, he needs all MPPs supporting him, instead of bickering, accusations and the noise-making we hear quite often. We must provide leadership, and that is why I'm here. That is why all 103 of us should be here: to provide the people of our individual ridings and the province of Ontario with good government. We were elected to do so, and nothing else.

I renew my promise now that I shall, as a member of this House, represent the people of Thornhill and Concord, and always represent the views of the residents to the best of my ability. I am here on their behalf. That is why the people of Thornhill have elected me all six times. I ran as a local councillor for the city of Vaughan. I will always be thankful for that, and the fact that the same people who chose me also chose my wife in the last municipal election to represent them and replace me once I was elected here.

With that, let me say again how pleased I am to be here and trying to make a difference in this House, in this province and, hopefully, in this country. After all, Ontario is the largest province, and what takes place in this House certainly provides leadership to the entire country.

When I came here, and still today, I was amazed how some members acted in this House. I felt that by coming here I was going to enter a House where decisions were made, where serious discussions would take place, where philosophy was going to be discussed, instead of hearing bickering all over the place. Quite often, I have difficulty

listening to what people are saying because there is discussion going on all over the House which has nothing to do with the topic of discussion. I hope and trust that the minister responsible to make changes in this House will be able to do so quickly so that we will spend more efficient time in making the decisions that are important to the people who have sent us here, instead of trying to argue partisan discussion, which, at the end of the day, doesn't do anything for this province. Sometimes when I listen to what people have to say in this House, I wonder if my kids are watching me on TV, because if they are, chances are I will not be able to feel as excited at being here. I believe that when the kids or anybody who watches this House on TV sees what does take place, I wonder what they think of us.

Therefore, I guess I'm trying to stress a point that is so important to me. Please, let's make sure that we remember why we are here. We are here to make changes. We are here to make a better system. We are here to make efficiency. Efficiency comes when everybody co-operates. When there is an issue that makes sense we should encourage it, whomever is speaking. It doesn't matter which party it is. After all, at the end of the day, we will be judged individually by our ridings.

I have been in politics for 27 years and have participated in so many elections. It reminds me of how interesting it is that when we go door to door, people really remember us based on what we do. Sure the political affiliation has some value, but people look at what we did in the House, how we represented the people and what kind of leadership we provided in the community we represent. If all of us would see value in what I'm saying, surely we would be able to act much more professionally in this House.

Again, there are a number of issues that we know must be addressed. My party, the Liberal Party of Ontario, has made clear the commitments we want to deal with. The other two parties in the House, it seems to me, are not that far away when it's time to identify the issues. What I would ask this House is that we try to co-operate in a way that we will be able to achieve those issues sooner, quicker, so that not only will we do the right thing for the people of Ontario and Canada and the world, but we will also be able to spend more time in our constituencies, with our families and with our children at home, instead of sitting here listening to bickering and nonsense.

With that, Mr Speaker, let me tell you again how honoured I am to be here. It took me 25 years to come here. Twenty-three years ago I tried to come to this House, and unfortunately it took me this long to reach this location. I am so pleased and excited, and I hope the House will keep me at that level. With that in mind, let me thank you, Mr Speaker, and everybody for listening to my speech.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure today to be here to witness the maiden speeches by the member from Brampton Centre and the member from Thornhill. It is important. I would hope the member from Thornhill,

with his most recent remarks, won't be disappointed by the process of democracy and full debate. I felt, and do feel, very much the same as he does in my opening remarks, nervously made in 1995 after being elected here.

I admire and respect the experience the member from Thornhill brings to this place, serving on other levels of government, which is important. I can say it reminded me much of my own background, in terms of how important our community, our province and our country are. In that regard, when raising my family, I found myself drawn, very much like yourself, to try to make a change, to try to make a contribution, all in the context of the ideology of politics.

That's where this actually becomes rather unproductive at times, because our role in opposition is to point out those parts of legislation that we have a problem with. I've always said that, from my experience, if you have three people in a room it's difficult to get them to agree on what time it is. Here the issues are far more complex, and the solutions or suggestions are a series of options. Those options, over time, may not work, and all governments, I believe, try to move it forward.

But out of respect for your remarks and the 20-some years you spent in public office prior to getting here, I hope you enjoy your experience here and that your contribution is a benefit to you individually and to your riding specifically, but more importantly, for the greater good of all of us in Ontario. I think that's a commendable goal by any member here. Thank you for your remarks.

1550

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I want to make some comments with respect to the speech by the member from Brampton Centre, because if there ever was a promise broken by this government to the people of Brampton Centre, then the P3 hospital is it. I want to remind this member and her constituents and all other Liberals who don't like to hear the truth that this is what Premier McGuinty said about P3 hospitals: "What I take issue with is the mechanism. We believe in public ownership and public financing (of health care). I will take these hospitals and bring them inside the public sector," said Dalton McGuinty to the Ottawa Citizen on Wednesday, May 28, 2003. He also said, and I know Liberals don't like to hear this, "Mr McGuinty believes that public-private sector partnerships in health care would ultimately cost the province more money than traditional arrangements. He says such arrangements would be discontinued."

That was the promise Mr McGuinty made. That was the promise I'm sure this member made to her constituents. Your government has broken this promise. What will go on in Brampton and Ottawa is this: A private sector consortium is going to privately finance this hospital and that's going to cost the taxpayers of Ontario more, because it costs more for the private sector to borrow than it does for the government, and the private sector is going to want to make a profit off this little arrangement, probably on the order of 15% to 20%.

So instead of traditionally using capital grants through the public sector to build this hospital, we're going to pay more for the private sector consortium to do this. We're going to pay twice, and we're going to pay through the operating grant, putting services and hospital programs at risk. New Democrats oppose private hospitals. These hospitals should be publicly financed, like your Premier promised.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): First of all, I want to thank the member from Brampton Centre, Linda Jeffrey, and the member from Thornhill, Mario Racco, for their maiden speeches. You can hear that they speak of their ridings and the pride in their communities. It is also encouraging and inspiring to hear newly elected members in this House bring idealism and optimism, to be a public voice for their constituents in protecting the public interest.

In my capacity as parliamentary assistant for democratic renewal, I see the opportunity to strengthen the relevance of this Legislature and of enhancing the role of the private member with the sincerity and ideals that the newly elected members bring to this House. We have many new members. But it's probably the quality and the talent these new members bring that are the best assets, both for this government and for this Legislature.

We are all here as individual members because we have been elected by our constituents. It is that opportunity that the new members certainly appreciate. You can hear from their maiden speeches that wonderful period in the life of a legislator when you actually hear the sincerity and ideals in their voice. None of us should lose that throughout the career we have in this place, because it is a privilege. It's a privilege for me to have heard the inspiring words from both members.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I'm delighted to speak and to praise the new members for Thornhill and Brampton Centre for giving their maiden speeches. Speaking on behalf of all of us who are rookies to this place, including two new members from the Progressive Conservative caucus and countless members from the Liberal caucus after the last election, I find it personally inspiring to hear the members speak about their ridings with such passion and conviction.

I want to commend the member for Brampton Centre on her comments about those most important issues in her riding—I think she was elected because she feels the heartbeat, the pulse of her riding—and the eloquent words of the member for Thornhill, who spoke about his own desire about what this place could become if occasionally we could set aside partisanship.

I might note for the record that my understanding of this place is that when someone gives a maiden speech, it is on a non-partisan basis, other than the fact of course that they were elected, and that usually the responses from members of the opposition, members of the other parties, are tempered.

I commend the member for Durham, who I know and respect as being a particularly partisan member, and who has always been, because he refrained and spoke

movingly, I think, about the sentiments expressed by our two members.

I was frankly shocked that the member from Nickel Belt—

Ms Martel: And appalled.

Mr Wilkinson: —but never appalled when I'm dealing with the member from Nickel Belt; just shocked, and sometimes, I really think, disappointed, that when the member from Brampton Centre speaks so passionately about her own riding, someone from another corner of Ontario would get up and lecture this House about her motivation, about why she's here, about what she represents, about what she believes. Surely in a maiden speech we should allow a member to speak their mind and commend them for actually being here.

The Deputy Speaker: It is time for a reply. The member for Brampton Centre or the member for Thornhill can have two minutes to reply.

Mrs Jeffrey: It was a nerve-racking experience to do my first maiden speech. I've had it in my thought process since December. I can tell you why I'm here. I'm here because the people of Brampton Centre supported my running for office, because they were so frustrated with the kind of promises that were given to them about their health care, and they were frustrated by so many promises that were not kept about their highways and their colleges.

More importantly now, this government, through its throne speech, has given my community hope. It is so important to have a community with hope, and I see a change in the atmosphere in my community. They are starting to believe government can do what it has always promised it could do.

They saw Minister Smitherman come out to our community and they embraced him when he came out, physically and metaphorically. They were hugely impressed that a minister would come to my community to talk about the problems, to make a commitment to make our hospital publicly accountable, and to assist the community in building a hospital that we've needed for decades. I'm shocked that we've waited this long. I'm pleased that we're moving forward and that we have the momentum, the will and the desire to make sure our promise is kept.

I wanted to use my maiden speech to remind people of the investment this community is going to receive from Ontario, which it needs and so richly deserves. It has the growth that absolutely shows it is entitled to that kind of health care. It's been waiting a long time, and I am thrilled we're going to make that investment.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr O'Toole: Actually, this isn't my maiden speech, so I will not depart to the—

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): You've never stopped since you started.

Mr O'Toole: I think we're all trying to do our best here, and our roles are always different.

Today's order paper business is to respond to the throne speech, and it's been a long time. In fact, the Lieu-

tenant Governor made the throne speech in this House on November 20.

Mr Hardeman: November 20?

Mr O'Toole: Exactly. His Excellency, Mr Bartleman, read the report just exactly as the government and Premier McGuinty had written it for him.

I'm surprised, listening to the maiden speech and the two-minute response from the member from Brampton Centre. Not to be critical, but she was trying to imply that at the time of the election in 2003, under the Ernie Eves government, there was a shortage in health care, and all these various deficits were there. It just shows the little experience she actually brings to this place. We had the largest expansion of post-secondary education ever in the history of any province or any jurisdiction in Canada; the largest expansion in health care infrastructure in Canadian history as a result of the Health Services Restructuring Commission; the strongest growth in the Canadian economy, with balanced budgets.

Of course, in the last year prior to the election, there were several interruptions, not the least of which was mad cow or BSE, which affected the agricultural community. There was the issue of SARS, which affected all the health care professions, and the paralysis that occurred in tourism, the economic implications that were there. I don't think any government of any stripe would try to inflict that on the people of Ontario. To imply that was somehow the responsibility of the government just shows a person's lack of understanding of the economy of Ontario.

1600

We put to the people an honest argument during the election, prior to October 2. Apparently the people made a choice, but at least we told the hard facts or what I call the truth. It's common knowledge for those listening today. I have the booklets here; I have the 230 promises; I have them here for the people of Ontario. There's book number one, book number two, number three, number four, number five. These five different books outline 230 promises that the people of Ontario now have come to know as broken promises. They got an early start on broken promises. I just happen to have with me a little reference list where I keep track of these for my constituents. I write to them every week and I try to keep them informed of the latest broken promise.

I think the latest broken promise is the one that was in the media today, and it's the freeze on tuition fees. All of this, of course, was sort of outlined in the throne speech as well. The other part of these equations that the people of Ontario need to pay attention to is not just the broken promises, which I've come to expect—Liberals don't handle the truth very wisely. The Liberals'—the other acronym or analogy I make—whole foothold is to tax and spend. All I'm saying is going to be shown over the next four years to be the case.

What did they actually start with? I think even today the member from Nickel Belt asked the Minister of Health a question which, prior to the election, illustrates just how kind of reflective or unreflective the Liberals

can be during an election, or how not straightforward—let's put it that way. I want to say that the member from Nickel Belt asked the question of the Minister of Health, and really the question was pointing to the member from Sudbury.

So the member from Nickel Belt was basically in the same kind of area in the election, and it's my understanding the member from Sudbury was passing around cards that said Dalton McGuinty promises to fund the Sudbury hospital at, I believe, 85%. The regular funding for capital is 70-30: 70% by the province and 30% the local's share.

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I don't think the member from Nickel Belt said that.

Mr O'Toole: The member from Sudbury now is again denying it here, and in fact the Minister of Health—the member from Nickel Belt didn't raise the question because it was just hearsay. That was the kind of deviousness going on during the election: Say anything to get elected.

The Deputy Speaker: Will the member take his seat. I'd like to keep the language rather tempered, and the word "devious" implies other things, so maybe you will just—

Mr O'Toole: OK, I'll just say they had difficulty explaining their accurate position, and so I withdraw it if "devious" offends someone. It's one of the few words you could use there, but to be democratic and diplomatic, I would just say they didn't respond with the facts, and that's really the case here. I found that during the election in my own riding, where they would say absolutely anything to get elected. If it had no basis in fact, that's the case. That's the litany I'm going to read out.

They sort of started with the Oak Ridges moraine: "We're not going to build any houses up there." How did they do? That's the first broken promise, technically. The second one I think was Bill 2, where they raised taxes, or they raised their revenue by cancelling tax cuts, many of them retroactively, by \$4 billion. That was your first, worst tax increase. They said they wouldn't increase taxes. They were seen in a big smarmy picture with the now Premier with the taxpayers' federation, signing the pledge. Remember that? Signing the promise, taking the pledge. A photo op—

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I take exception to some of those adjectives employed by the honourable member.

The Deputy Speaker: The member from Hamilton West, I'm kind of keeping track of that. I take your point. The member for Durham, you should be sitting in your seat. Now I'm ready to recognize the member for Durham.

Mr O'Toole: Mr Speaker, perhaps I could get the time set back. I get about another minute.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Durham, just continue, please.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much for that indulgence. There again, shutting down the very debate. They don't want me to—

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Durham, take your seat. I'm not shutting down debate. Points of order do arise. I listened only a short time, and then I had the member take her seat in order that you might continue. I'm going to give you that opportunity now.

Mr O'Toole: I apologize if I've offended you. I've lost two minutes of democratic freedom. I've lost the democratic freedom to speak. I think the point raised by the member from Hamilton West was clearly not a point of order; it was just a time-wasting tactic so that I couldn't list the over 40 promises that have been broken. I'll stick to the facts here.

Ban self-promotional government advertising: In fact, there's even stuff coming to me now each day that is—it's difficult to use "obsequious" or "subliminal." These words are suggestive, I suppose, so I won't use them.

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): Obsequious?

Mr O'Toole: Obsequious, OK? You can look it up. Obfuscation; look it up.

Now we have the member here from Etobicoke North trying to dissuade me from putting it on the record. The member should know full well that I have the right. I have the floor. The member from Etobicoke North does this every single time in the House. He's an absolute shame for the government today.

The Deputy Speaker: Will the member take his seat? I would ask the member for Durham to direct his comments through the Chair.

Mr O'Toole: With that, I will just continue to read.

The promise, again, to cap hydro rates: During the election, they said they were going to cap them at 4.3 cents, and now we know they're increasing them by 25%. It's this lack of confidence that I have in anything they say. The ministers get up and make these pronouncements. Whether it's on the new support program for agriculture—I can't understand for a moment why the commodity councils even have the discussions, because it's just one more promise.

Now, the other thing of having independence for the appointments: I could go through a list of appointments that are absolutely shocking, the first one being Sheela Basur being appointed as an independent medical officer of health. This clearly, in my opinion, was not the case.

It's been brought up here almost every day: the now Minister of Finance and a very key appointment to the Ontario Securities Commission of a very reputable person. That appointment was denied to the committee that reviews appointments. I sat on it. Again, it's a litany.

The cancellation of the P3 hospitals, the public-private partnerships: I understand your right to disagree, but to tell the people you're going to cancel them and not do that, and then not let them see the truth of what you did—it's hard to find the word when someone isn't dealing with the truth very well. "Obfuscation" comes to mind.

Public inquiry into meat inspection: Mr Peters, the Minister of Agriculture, promised an inquiry. They slipped it off the board to some judicial panel to review.

Reduced use of private consultants: Well, the first frigging—the first person they hired was—

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: My good friends in Durham and Bowmanville don't even use that kind of language. What would Madge, your mother-in-law, say? She's probably watching this evening. I think you've got to keep track of what the member from Durham is doing.

The Deputy Speaker: Will the member from Durham please take his seat when I'm standing. Perhaps the member from Durham will please temper his language.

Mr O'Toole: The member from Algoma-Manitoulin, basically his comments should be struck as well. He should know better than that, because he does sit in the chair from time to time.

Peter Donolo was the first consultant; John Manley was the next consultant. Every consultant that you've appointed, indirectly or directly, contradicts one of your promises.

I would say the whole thing of reducing auto insurance—my constituents are still waiting, and they'll be waiting and waiting.

Providing \$300 million annually from provincial gas tax for municipal transit: They not only didn't give the two cents, they took away what the previous government was transferring to municipal transit.

1610

Holding elections every four years: We know that is another commitment that's been seriously reneged on, shall we say.

Respecting MPPs' democracy: If someone looks at the transcript today, you might see that maybe isn't happening as well as it could.

Freezing university and college tuition fees—

The Deputy Speaker: Will the member for Durham please take his seat? Please take your seat. Really, the Chair sees subtle references to the way that I am handling this debate. I am trying to do it as fairly as possible and I'm trying to keep the language as tempered as I can. So I do wish the member for Durham would co-operate.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I think I've lost about five minutes on the clock now. I'm not in any way challenging anyone, but it's the amount of disrespect to the time of my speaking by the members for Guelph-Wellington—or the member for Guelph, I guess it is. If I have to name them, certainly it's very difficult for me to keep in context the points I'm making, and the points I'm making are very clear.

During the throne speech, during the election and during the procedures in this House, there is no time that I have confidence that what is being said will actually be what's delivered. It's that lack of confidence that I'm addressing this afternoon in terms of the throne speech. Now naturally, it's always quite adversarial when you're criticizing someone who is not being forthright with you. It's in that vein that I find it's hard for me to not put these things on the record, when in fact they are the record.

People want to say it's a harsh way of dealing with what goes on in this place, especially when I heard previously the members for Brampton Centre and Thornhill make some very excellent maiden speeches about their

ridings and how they arrived here, and I have the greatest respect for that. But our job here is clearly to point out where we have grave and serious differences. These are serious concerns that I'm raising, and they're being raised in question period and there have been points of order. In fact, I believe it was the member for Toronto-Danforth who tried to move that the Minister of Finance would appear before one of the all-party standing committees, and that was blocked by a whipped vote in a committee. I understand that, but the people of Ontario need to see that the minions of the centre office are hard at work controlling the agenda of Ontario.

I know that we can promise and promise. The teachers, the 8,000 nurses—my wife's a teacher—the number of students in the class, all these promises that were made are still to be delivered on. That's the problem here. It is hard for me to point these things out because they are the truth. There were 230 promises made; a promise made should be a promise kept. I judge a person by their integrity and their forthrightness, even if it's difficult.

The role of government, you will find out—and I would say, looking at some of the members across who have served in other offices, they would know—the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot should know—that it is a promise that you should keep. If they ever keep a promise, they're associated with that.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: He's barracking now to try and overcome any of the comments that I'm putting on the record. That's clearly the intention. I can honestly say that to work here in this House under these conditions, sometimes it's difficult to serve the people of Ontario in a straightforward role as an opposition member and to make sure your voice is heard. I would only say to you that my job is different. My job is to point out, often painfully, the commitments that were made and the failure to deliver those commitments.

I can tell you, each person in Ontario who voted for you wants you to deliver them. I suspect that's why you are the government. It's up to the opposition to point out that that indeed is not happening.

I have other things that I could put on the record in the two or three minutes. There are some good things that go on here, and I do say this in respect to change the tone, because I hadn't got through the list of promises, by any stretch.

I attended a reception last night which was sponsored by Kevin Flynn, who is the MPP for Oakville, and I was quite impressed with the information provided. It was on property tax assessment. That, we all know from MPAC, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp, is cause for great alarm throughout all municipalities, and in fact across Ontario.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): Who set it up?

Mr O'Toole: The member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot has just interrupted again. I guess he has intercepted again. He is a person who

wasn't really straightforward with the people of his area when it came to amalgamation and de-amalgamation. It's these kinds of people who are serving in government, and they're caught criticizing us for—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: We are all human. I have made mistakes, and for those I apologize. The reception last night was informative. I encourage members—in fact, there was a whole list of municipalities. I should say that former member Marcel Beaubien was there as well. He had done a lot of work on the assessment system. There was a list of municipalities that have now asked the province to revisit the MPAC; that would be Norwood, Alviston, Callander, Chatham-Kent, Haliburton, Kawartha Lakes, Peterborough county. So a lot of communities aren't happy with the delivery of service. I would encourage you to look at the proposal brought forward by CLT and sponsored by your member Kevin Flynn, which I thought was informative and productive.

I thought there was another very good presentation the night before. That presentation was from the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors. It was something that many of us may not pay as much attention to as we could. They're really talking about the important security issue surrounding land registration records and how they expose us to potential risks going forward. I commend the group there: Murray J. LeGris, who's the executive director of the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors. They're a self-regulating organization. They did bring some very good information to the attention of members.

Outside of the House, where there's the drama of theatre and interruption, it is our duty to point out the ongoing debate on policy, the ongoing holding people accountable to those things they commit to. If I have in any way offended anyone with my direct remarks, including you, Speaker, I completely apologize for that, but it is my duty to point out those things that you've promised and failed to deliver.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments.

Ms Martel: I want to just follow up on a few things that the member from Durham had to say. He focused on a number of the broken promises by this government already, only seven months into its mandate. There's one I want to focus on in particular and then a second issue that I think is important to raise.

First of all, he mentioned the position of the chief medical officer of health. The government has appointed Dr Sheela Basrur in that position. I think that Dr Basrur did a fine, wonderful, incredible job during the SARS outbreak. I have no question about her capacity and her skill.

What I do wonder, though, is why the government broke its promise with respect to that position. In the government's health platform it says very clearly that the position of the chief medical officer of health would be independent of government. I think that's a position that the government should have kept. It's a position that has also been taken by the committee that recently released the interim report on SARS. You'll remember that the

former government appointed a number of people, Dr Donald Low and others, to do work on SARS and how Ontario could better respond. Their second recommendation, which was released in December 2003, said that the position of the chief medical officer of health should be independent.

What did this government do? This government, in addition to making her the chief medical officer of health, also made her an assistant deputy minister. So she's tied more clearly than ever before to the bureaucracy, which is what we wanted to get away from. You want to give the public every perception, real and perceived, that the person in that position is not tied to the government in any way, shape or form, is not just parroting the government line. This would have been a simple, easy promise to keep, a simple amendment. I don't understand why the government didn't do it.

With respect to funding 85% of the capital costs at the Sudbury Regional Hospital—I said earlier and I'll say it again—the member from Sudbury talked about that before and during the campaign. I asked the question today because we can't afford to pay anymore. I just want the Liberal government to keep its promise in this regard.

1620

Mr Qaadri: I was honoured today to be sitting next to my colleague the MPP from Thornhill, Mr Mario Racco, as he was delivering his throne speech address, his maiden speech, and the depth and the feeling and, I think, the heartfelt sentiment that he put into talking about his own history, having won six elections, and also the underlying, perhaps, premise or inspiration that really should inform all of us as we come here and deliberate on the business of Ontario. As Mr Racco said, he wishes that many of the opposition members would conduct themselves with, perhaps I may say, a more elevated level of seriousness—

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe this is questions and comments on the speech delivered by Mr O'Toole, not Mr Racco.

The Deputy Speaker: Would the member please take his seat. That's not a point of order.

Mr Qaadri: I'd like to thank my honourable colleague for bringing my attention to Mr O'Toole, the MPP from Leeds-Grenville. I'd be very pleased to oblige. There's so much to work with there. For example, in referring to the MPP from Leeds-Grenville, the Honourable Mr O'Toole, I'm reminded of the difference between the speeches of Gladstone, which is, of course, what my colleague Mario Racco did, and Fred Flintstone, which seemed to be more the level of the MPP from Leeds-Grenville. In fact—

Interjections: Durham.

Mr Qaadri: The MPP from Durham, sorry.

This place is the seat of parliamentary democracy in this province, a tradition that is 800 years old. This is a place for serious business, for serious deliberation. The MPP from Durham, I counted, actually led to something

on the order of seven infractions of the standing orders in a single 10-minute address, and we would like improvement for the future.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Nepean-Carleton, you might like this. Just for everybody's explanation, I thought there was a certain amount of latitude given on the speech from the throne. I'm advised that there is, but when something is drawn to my attention, then I should rule on it. So it was a point of order. I think I did hear the member kind of get back on track. So we'll all keep that in mind from now on, OK? The member from Nepean-Carleton.

Mr Baird: Speaker, that is the remark of a professional parliamentarian, and I thank you for your comment.

I found the comments by the member for Durham to be a useful intervention. On the questions and comments from the member from Etobicoke North, he's been here six months and he's already hectoring and lecturing members who have been here nine years about the rules, which I thought is rather interesting.

Mr Hardeman: It's not interesting, it's arrogant.

Mr Baird: It is rather interesting, and there is a degree of arrogance in that. This is a member who goes far and wide telling people not to call him "Mr" Qaadri but "Dr" Qaadri, which shows where his priorities—

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Nepean-Carleton, I remind him that this is questions and comments regarding the throne speech.

Mr Baird: Mr Speaker, you are—

Mr Hardeman: A gentleman and a scholar.

Mr Baird: A gentleman and a scholar, says the member for Oxford.

The people of Ontario should know that the member for Durham, with respect to his speech on the throne speech, is a member who works incredibly hard representing his constituents at caucus meetings around this place. He is always forceful in standing up and talking about the issues in Clarington, talking about the issues in North Oshawa and bringing the concerns of people he represents in the east end of Durham. That's why the people of Durham have placed confidence in him not once, not twice, but three times, and sent him to this place, and long before that, as an elected representative before he was in this place. I just want to congratulate him on his speech.

I'd like to ask him a few questions, if I might. I'd like to ask the member, what do people in his constituency think about ethics in government? Do they think it's important, and do they think that we should raise the bar or lower the bar on ethics? Maybe that's a question he might address. It would be good advice to the government when they listen to his useful interventions.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I do enjoy the opportunity to hear the member for Durham. I will speak specifically to his discussion this evening, his 10-minute speech. I will give him some contrasts to what he was trying to assert that this government has been doing, or has not been doing.

They fired water inspectors; we hired them. You encouraged sprawl; we're changing the Planning Act to stop that. You closed schools; we're calling a moratorium on closing those schools. You did not release the task force on mental health; we've released them. You've wasted millions and millions of dollars on self-promotional gobbledygook in your advertising; we're putting a law out to ban that. You pointed fingers instead of helping farmers; we hammered out a deal with the feds for the farmers. They interfered with the Provincial Auditor; we've given them new, sweeping powers across the province to take care of our money. You guys love skipping question period; we've introduced a law to make their attendance mandatory. You've allowed a \$3-billion boondoggle on OPG; we're reassessing that and making sure it never happens again. So giving you the contrast that you need, I would like to say to the member for Durham, let's talk about some of the things we've done to make this a better province today. We've already taken those steps.

You like to point out, and you assume that everybody's listening to you and thinking that, "You know what, they're absolutely right. Everything that you say is happening." I want to make sure that the members of this House and the people out there understand clearly: There is a contrast between how the government of the other day used to operate and how this government is operating now. We're bringing back democracy. We're going to bring back democratic renewal and we're going to involve the people of Ontario. Like no other jurisdiction in North America, we went to 12 million people and asked them what they want to see in the budget, and they're going to see real change.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Durham has two minutes to reply, and I sincerely want to see him get a full two minutes.

Mr O'Toole: I would acknowledge that people did respond. In fact, it would appear that they were indeed listening. I would just comment on the member for Brant, as he was the most recent speaker, and say to him that some of the questions today still remain unanswered. The \$6,000 promise per person in long-term care: Where is the money? That question has been asked. You promised it. It's a question that should be asked. If you want to look at the other outstanding commitment that people expect, it's the 2 cents per litre from gas for transit. I just wonder if there's really any commitment to deliver on the promises. I raised the question.

I'm looking at booklet number one in your advertising pre-election campaign. In it you promised, "We will cap class sizes in all important early grades and the class size would be a fixed number of 20." These are the promises that the people of Ontario often seem to forget, not the least of which is the most recent increase, April 1, in your electricity bill. During the election they promised to maintain the freeze at 4.3 cents and they've increased it as much as 25%. The consumers are the taxpayers of Ontario, and as such they deserve to be told and you deserve to be held accountable, as we were, and we're no longer government.

I think early in the mandate there is a sense of forgiveness. The members who responded today have provided some input. The member for Nickel Belt clarified a couple of the points that I raised. The member for I believe Nepean-Carleton pointed out that it is my duty and privilege to work hard here. I'm embarrassed by the member for Etobicoke North. He not only used my name, which is improper; he addressed me by the wrong riding, which is improper. There have been a number of infractions. As well, he's started on personal attacks. That's his record; that's his legacy. I'm only repeating for the record that that important exemption is made for him, but not for us.

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): At the outset I'd like to notify the House that I'll be sharing my time with the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Although I've had the pleasure of intervening in a number of debates on a few occasions in this Legislature, this is the first time that I'm able to stand in this place and formally acknowledge and thank the voters of Kitchener Centre for giving me the great honour of representing them as their MPP. Such an honour is humbling. All I can do is promise to work as hard as possible to represent the people in my riding and never lose touch with the basic beliefs and values that have made my community one of the most prosperous and caring places to live in Ontario.

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I would be remiss not to acknowledge my predecessors from Kitchener Centre, starting with the individual I replaced, Mr Wayne Wettlaufer. Although a political opponent, I want to publicly thank and recognize Mr Wettlaufer for his commitment to public service and his pride in our community. Other predecessors have touched me more personally through their friendship, support and encouragement and will always serve as powerful examples. Individuals like Jim Breithaupt, John Sweeney and David Cooke taught me that politics is an honourable profession and that in your own way you can make a positive difference.

With your indulgence, I also want to thank all those who supported and encouraged me during the course of the election, particularly my brother and sister and their families, and perhaps most importantly, Sara Pendergast, the woman who began the election campaign as my girlfriend, ended it as my fiancée and recently became my wife.

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): Did she vote for you?

Mr Milloy: She didn't live in my riding.

Elections are not simply about slogans and promises. By putting our names forward as candidates, each and every one of us in this Legislature was forced to define and express their own personal political philosophies. In my case, I come here believing that government can be a force for good in our society, that it can create opportunities, remove barriers and at times offer a helping hand. I don't believe government can solve every problem. I believe that just as government has a duty to create

opportunities, individuals have a responsibility to take advantage of them and put in the required effort to succeed.

I believe in balanced budgets and low taxes, but I also believe that all of us have an obligation to pay our fair share to maintain adequate services for all, especially the less fortunate.

I am very concerned about poverty and homelessness, but at the same time I recognize that a strong economy and business environment can be harnessed to help address these problems. As a colleague recently remarked to me, I am sure glad the good Samaritan had some money in his pocket. I believe these core beliefs resonated in the riding of Kitchener Centre during the last election.

Kitchener Centre is the heart of a proud and dynamic community that makes up Kitchener-Waterloo. It is comprised of hardworking men and women who see the value of education. In fact, my area boasts three excellent post-secondary institutions: the University of Waterloo, Wilfred Laurier University and Conestoga College.

Residents of Kitchener Centre also see the importance of a first-rate health care system, including the need to support the outstanding work done at our two local hospitals, St Mary's and Grand River, as well as the need for a safe and healthy environment.

They also recognize the responsibility to pay for these services as long as they know the money is being spent efficiently and effectively with real, measureable results.

These beliefs were reflected in the positive messages that our Premier and party brought forward in the last election campaign and that were developed in the speech from the throne, a speech that outlined our plans to provide excellence for all in education, deliver the health care we need, build an economy that achieves our potential, grow strong communities and create a government that works for Ontarians.

We have already started to deliver on many of the commitments outlined in the speech. To give just a short list, since the election we have hired more meat and water inspectors, introduced a moratorium on school closures, increased funding for high-risk students, introduced measures to ban partisan government advertising, capped and reduced auto insurance, increased the minimum wage, cancelled the private school tax credit, reached new constructive agreements with the federal government, introduced measures to increase the Provincial Auditor's powers, announced a tuition freeze, announced new money for housing, started to clean up the mess at Hydro, and announced \$385 million in additional funding for hospitals, including over \$14 million for my area.

We have also begun to address the huge economic challenge facing our province. As members are aware, despite protestations to the contrary from the previous government, we inherited a shortfall of some \$5.6 billion. Although we have no choice but to address this grave fiscal situation, its existence doesn't change our basic belief in the positive role government can play. For that

reason, eliminating the deficit cannot be about slashing and burning. I think Ontarians, and the people in my riding, have had quite enough of that. Instead, as was outlined in the throne speech and the Minister of Finance's economic statement delivered a few weeks later, we need to reshape the way we deliver services. We need to make them more efficient and effective. We need to shift resources from services that matter least to those that matter most. We need to find new revenue sources. In short, we have to do government differently.

A few moments ago, I mentioned an announcement of new money for hospitals. Much more important than the money that accompanied this announcement was its underlying vision. Rather than throwing money at health care as previous governments did, the Minister of Health announced that he was going to sit down with hospitals to work out accountability agreements that spell out expected results. In other words, every dollar will have to be justified in terms of how it will help patients. At the same time, the government will be taking a broader look at where we invest health care dollars, asking ourselves if more money should go to areas like home care and preventive measures, which cost much less than hospital stays. I congratulate the Minister of Health on this approach, because at the end of the day it is not about the quantity of the spending, but the quality of the results.

I understand that the government is in the process of identifying other major priority areas where performance measures can be established to show progress is being made; for example, higher literacy and math scores, or increased public transit ridership. This way, the people of Ontario will be able to judge the performance of this government in a real and tangible fashion.

As members know, we are currently engaged in the largest pre-budget consultation in the history of our province. We want to learn at first hand from the people of Ontario how we should transform our government. In my area I welcomed 140 people to a special budget town hall. What I saw impressed me: professionals, union leaders, small business men and women, social activists and ordinary working people sitting down together and rolling up their sleeves, trying to find creative ways to reform government.

Why is there so much positive interest in our efforts? I believe that the people of my riding, and the people of Ontario as a whole, recognize that we are not looking to find fiscal room as an end in itself or to deliver tax cuts to the rich. No, the difficult choices the government will be making in the coming months are to lay the foundation needed to create the first-class health and education system and safe and clean communities we outlined in the speech from the throne.

Our province faces some tremendous challenges over the next four years, but by sticking to the basic values reflected so clearly in this throne speech, we can overcome them and put our province on track for a bright and prosperous future.

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Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I want to thank the member from Kitchener Centre for

sharing his time with me. I also want to tell everyone that I stand in my place today to make my maiden speech and to thank the people of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for the confidence and trust they have placed in me.

This place that I stand in is truly a place that belongs to those people in the riding. The members of the riding consist of 98,000 people. There have been many who have stood here before me in the Legislature, from all parties: Doug Reycraft, David Smith, and my predecessor, Marcel Beaubien, just to mention three. They have honoured their constituents by representing them to the best of their abilities. I hope to do the same during my tenure as their member of provincial Parliament.

Lambton-Kent-Middlesex is by most definitions a rural riding. The largest community in our riding is about 12,000 people. It is also a very diversified riding. We are made up of English, Scottish, Irish, Germans, Dutch, French, Chinese, Vietnamese, Ukrainians, Hungarians, East Indians and Americans. The First Nations communities have always been an integral part of the riding's mosaic, contributing in their own unique way to our diversity. Uncle Tom's Cabin at Dresden is a reminder not only of the oppression suffered by members of the Afro-American community; it is a reminder of the pride they have in their history and the richness of their contribution.

Agriculture and its related industries remain the economic engine of the riding, but employment in manufacturing, tourism and other service industries continues to grow as many of our municipalities seek out new economic development. They are working to promote their communities and overcome both distance and low population densities in their efforts to attract new industries.

New investors are looking for schools for their employees and their children, health care, including rural hospitals, a healthy environment, and the infrastructure that will transport resources and finished products in and out of the area. We need to be able to offer prospective employers a workforce that is both flexible and well-educated.

But not all rural ridings in this province enjoy the diversity of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. Throughout rural Ontario, there continues to be a disparity in advantages and opportunities. Among the major forces creating pressure on rural areas are economic change, changing employment patterns, new environmental demands, and the out-migration of our youth. It has never been easy to be a farmer or a business person in small-town Ontario. When agriculture suffers, so do many businesses and services in their communities.

Agriculture remains synonymous with rural life. It is still the second-largest industry in Ontario, an economic driver that is second only to the auto industry, with farm gate sales of over \$8 billion per year and economic spin-off benefits of over \$30 billion a year.

Rural life as a culture is changing. Ours is not only a diverse community; it is a very complex one. The traditional image of it being a simpler way of life is no longer

true, but for those who live there it is still preferable to the lifestyle that is found in larger urban areas. Overall, this perception continues to draw thousands of tourists and non-farm residents into the countryside every year.

Although our lives are different from those of our urban cousins, we nevertheless have many of the same basic needs. We need job security, a clean environment, adequate family income, effective social services, schools and continuing education, and local places to worship, play and socialize.

How we address those needs must be adapted to our rural culture. One size truly does not fit all. It must be done so that we are left with sustainable communities. We must have quality schools that are close to home. We have as much right to access health care and hospitals as those who live in larger urban communities. We need rural economic development that gives us dignified employment. And we need the infrastructure that supports all that.

One of the best indicators of the relative health of our communities are our schools and churches. Rural schools and churches are the social hubs of our communities. Junior farmers and 4-H are no longer just for farm kids. Arenas and school gyms are needed to provide an outlet for the youth of our communities, with everything from sports events to Scouts and Guides to 4-H club meetings.

The greatest worry we have is the loss of our youth. Our young people want a reason to stay and not to be forced to leave because of a lack of opportunity. If rural Ontario is to survive, we need to retain our young families.

Our expectations have changed over the years. Rural Ontario has not always captured its fair share of services in return for society's use of our resources, and we have not always been patient or willing to stand back while others assumed control of our way of life. Rural citizens have taken it upon themselves to change their own circumstances. In one of my communities, a service club is tackling their doctor shortage by fundraising to pay a student's tuition in exchange for future health care in their area. Another municipal council is developing a mechanism that will facilitate the certification of internationally trained physicians. We have parents who challenge their school board so that their local school will stay open. Local citizens' groups monitor the dumping of household garbage that comes from all over the province, including the transportation of hazardous waste into a neighbouring riding, and citizens refuse to sit idly by as the safety of their drinking water is threatened.

Volunteerism has long been the hallmark of rural communities, both out of goodwill and necessity. Ours is a cohesive social attitude. We each know our personal fate is intertwined with that of our neighbours. People in rural communities understand that we are interdependent. We pride ourselves in our independence, yet we all know that we have to depend on our neighbours, and we can when we need their help. Although our community volunteers still come forward to offer their time freely, they look to all levels of government to provide the

resources they need to deliver the services. That means that as a government we have to create policies that either get out of their way or assist them, or we may be asked for financial assistance to bring about innovative ideas. Regardless of what our role is, the result must be one that improves the quality of life for all, whether we live in urban, rural or northern Ontario.

You may well ask, why should the problems of rural communities merit any attention when so much of our population lives in urban areas? I believe that in an equitable society, we should not look at this only from the perspective of voter numbers or economic wealth, but from a position of what is the right thing to do and what is fair to all our citizens. We must look at the value and uniqueness of the contribution that rural Ontario brings to the table. What would Ontario be without a rural component? I truly believe that rural communities have the ability and resources to continue to make an important contribution to the wealth of this province, as they have done historically. We give to this province a social and economic quality that is unique and diverse.

The citizens of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex have told me that they expect me to represent their needs and influence the decisions that will improve the prosperity and vitality of their communities and their personal quality of life. These decisions must not only be visionary, they must be sustainable. A strong rural community is essential for a strong province overall. So I again thank the citizens of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for the confidence they have placed in me.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Baird: I listened with great interest, first on television to my colleague from Kitchener, and second to the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. I particularly strongly agree with her with respect to rural Ontario. I come from a riding where, while entirely in an urban municipality, about 40% of the people I serve live in rural communities in Ottawa. I say to her that, regardless of political stripe, whether it's Conservative, Liberal or New Democrat, it is a challenge to keep the interests of rural Ontario at the forefront, not just because Toronto and the GTA are so big and have such a great population, but because Queen's Park is headquartered right here in Toronto. Too often we read the Toronto papers in the morning and we forget that there are other voices, other issues, that are every bit as important to the future of the province. We always hear—and the Premier will say this on occasion—that a strong Ontario needs a strong Toronto. I don't think we hear enough from any political party about: If we're going to have a strong Ontario, we've got to have not just a strong rural Ontario but strong small communities and strong medium-sized municipalities. That's something that is incredibly important.

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It goes far beyond just dealing with agriculture. The effects of BSE are important to a small number of people who are directly affected, but they have a huge effect on the rural economy. There are not that many corn farmers,

but if corn prices are down, it has a huge impact on those in fertilizer or farm equipment or small retail stores in rural Ontario. I think it's a challenge. Those of us of any political stripe who represent rural communities should certainly work together to ensure that those concerns are heard.

We have heard about a small business tax cut. Many small businesses in rural Ontario, certainly in my riding and I suspect in hers, really get whacked with property taxes. That's one example, on a non-partisan basis, where I look forward to working with this member and others on strengthening rural Ontario.

Ms Martel: I want to thank the members from Kitchener Centre and Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for their comments.

I want to respond to the comments that were made by the member from Kitchener Centre. He referenced the difficult decisions and choices the government would have to make in the lead-up to the budget. If you listen to the public musings, particularly from the Minister of Finance, we all had better be worried about what some of those choices might be. I've heard the minister, Greg Sorbara, say on at least three different occasions that the Ontario drug benefit program may be up for grabs. The universality of the program that has been in place for many years may be completely set aside and we are going to ask "rich" seniors to pay for their own drug benefits.

Contrast that public musing with the preamble to the government's Bill 8, where the government speaks in glowing terms about supporting and enhancing medicare. Surely if you support and enhance medicare, you cannot take the step of ending the universality of the drug benefit program. There will be many seniors who will not be able to afford to pay, and we will pay much more in the long term as those seniors who can't afford to pay and take their medication end up in their doctors' offices, in emergency wards, in long-term-care facilities etc.

I'm also worried about the musings about selling off TVO or the LCBO. Why would we ever sell off the LCBO? We get about \$800 million worth of revenue annually as a province from the LCBO, and we use that to invest in our public services. If we privatize that, we can kiss that revenue goodbye. It would be folly for us to do that, but those are some of the musings.

What I'm most worried about is that we will see a decimation of public services, because the government will come in the budget and say, "We had such an overwhelming deficit that we have no choice." Do you know what? You guys knew about the deficit before the election, and that didn't stop you from making the promises you made. I hope you won't use that excuse in the upcoming budget.

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I'm pleased to enter this comment and question period in regard to the speeches just given by the members for Kitchener Centre and Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. I want to congratulate them both on their election victories. No one from any party enters this House without hard work and the sup-

port of their families, friends and so many others—new acquaintances you might have met during the election period.

I also want to congratulate the member for Kitchener Centre on his being a newlywed. He also had the foresight and knowledge to pick a wedding day that everyone can remember. He was wed on Valentine's Day. We know there can be no excuse for the member from Kitchener Centre forgetting that particular date.

I want to congratulate the member opposite from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. We share parts of the great municipality of Chatham-Kent. I appreciated her conversation about rural Ontario. Indeed all of us on this side of the House appreciate the role that rural Ontario puts forward in this province. We continually speak up for rural Ontario, and the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex does that on all occasions, speaking eloquently about her riding. We heard during her speech that she knows the riding well. She knows the rural schools, the important role they play, and the people within her community.

They are here to bring positive change to Ontario, and we can see that they are ready and willing to contribute to our caucus in any way, shape or form. They have been doing that for six months now. We're very proud of both the member from Kitchener Centre and the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I too would like to commend both the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and the member for Kitchener Centre on their maiden speeches in the House. As I recall, when I did mine 20 years ago in this House—

Mr Levac: Oh.

Mr Jackson: It was a little while back, yes. However, I thought they were done without rhetoric and without some of the bravado that typifies some of the debate in this House. I think that augurs well for your statesmanlike presence in the House, and I commend you.

During the course of the debate on the throne speech, I would have liked more mention from all members of the House with respect to children, seniors and persons with disabilities. I know there were many promises made in the last election and there are many disappointments out there particularly from these three groups of Ontario citizens with respect to what they can anticipate from their new government.

However, without taking up all of my time to discuss that—I'll have many opportunities in the next few days—I want to say that both individuals who spoke come from ridings with very proud and rich histories, both in terms of their geography and in terms of the representatives they have sent to this House. I truly hope they continue to enjoy their time here and take away from their time in Parliament much of the quality that their predecessors did. We miss them, but we also welcome you and appreciate your participation in the debate today.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has two minutes to reply.

Mrs Van Bommel: I would like to thank the members from Nepean-Carleton, Nickel Belt, Chatham-Kent-Essex and Burlington for their kind comments. I also want to thank the House for the opportunity to make my maiden speech. I'm sure the member from Kitchener Centre feels the same.

I would like to take this opportunity, however, to tell the people of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex about my experiences as their new MPP. The past five months have been a steep learning curve. It's been a pleasure to represent them, and also rural Ontario, as the rural affairs parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, John Gerretsen.

The responsibility of standing in my place and looking out over a chamber that is filled with history and tradition is thrilling and awe-inspiring at the same time.

Then there are the things that I hadn't thought about when I was elected, including finding a home away from home and all the accompanying risks that brought.

Since the outbreak of avian influenza in the Far East, I no longer step into our poultry barn at home because it's too risky. My husband, René, has worked too hard on the farm's on-farm food safety assurance program to jeopardize that, so going to the barn is no longer an option for me.

Being home for family events takes a certain amount of good luck and balancing with constituents' needs. Two grandchildren were born in December, and I was fortunate to have been with their mums at the birth of both of them. I welcome Josie and Nolan.

All of this has meant a real sacrifice for my family, and I want to thank them, especially my husband, René, and my mum, who is watching all the time. Without their support, there would be no poultry producer standing in this House today.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

1700

Mr Baird: I'm pleased to have a rare opportunity to rise in this House and to say a few words. I don't get the opportunity to speak much, so I appreciate the chance to speak to the throne speech.

I'd like to be able to look at the substance of the throne speech—it's the government's agenda for the legislative session—but I must say at the outset how disappointed we were that what was promised before people voted and what people have ended up seeing—that there's such a huge difference. People were sold one product, and another one is being delivered.

The throne speech did talk about education. I can tell you that education is one of the big priorities in my constituency. I represent a lot of young families in the growing suburbs of Stittsville and Barrhaven and South Nepean. We've been fortunate to see a number of schools go forward and be built.

I was at St Joseph's Catholic High School in South Nepean—a beautiful facility built with the reality of the funding formula. The Catholic board in Ottawa-Carleton responded to the challenge and has moved forward very aggressively over the years with a big school construc-

tion project. That has certainly worked for that board. They've shown that if you make some difficult decisions, it can work. I dare say that there are a number of community colleges which aren't nearly as nice and don't have nearly the breadth of offering that St Joe's high school has. It is virtually a small community college with the breadth of programs that they offer.

Just the other day I spent the morning at Monsignor Paul Baxter School, another new school that was built and opened three or four years ago, named after Monsignor Paul Baxter, who presided at St Patrick's Catholic Church in Fallowfield, Ontario, and had a strong relationship with the former Carleton Catholic School Board. The school was named in his honour.

The use of technology is just astounding, even for children as young as six. I had the opportunity to visit five or six classrooms and meet some of the children who attend school there. I talked to some of the teachers and the principal. They have a special program—I think they have about eight students who come to that school from other areas—for students who have had trouble fitting into the previous school experience and, with some additional supports, are hoping to get them back on track. I learned a little bit about that program. That's certainly something that has worked there.

The throne speech also talked about health care. I can tell the House that there is a huge amount of concern by hospital boards out there about Bill 8. I'm not being political when I say that there's not a single hospital in the province—there are 161 or 163 hospitals out there—and there is not a single hospital anywhere in Ontario that supports the bill. Are these a bunch of partisan hacks? No; they are the volunteer boards that run our hospitals. I look at the Queensway Carleton Hospital board in Nepean—it sort of abuts my riding and the member for Ottawa West-Nepean's—and their board is tremendously concerned about the direction this government is taking. It is done in the name of accountability, but it seems to me to be one-sided accountability. So I do have a concern about that. To say, "We're going to hold them accountable to live within their budget"—if you want them to do X and it's going to cost Y, there should be a corresponding method of accountability that they'll get the funding on that. There should be a corresponding accountability on the Minister of Health and the Minister of Finance, under the legal restrictions we have on the delivery of health care, that the funding will be there.

I'll tell you, it is a huge, huge challenge for hospitals in Ottawa with the funding levels they have. They've made great strides in recent years, but that accountability will be a lot of bluster. The Ministry of Health corporately—and I don't think it's going to change from one government to another—has a lot of wink-wink, nudge-nudge to ensure that programs aren't reduced with respect to budget decisions. In fact, we're already into the fiscal year and these hospitals don't know what their budget is. The members opposite made complaints about that for many years. The problem continues, just as we expected it would. It wasn't going to change overnight. It

didn't change under our government and it certainly hasn't changed under this government.

I also want to talk about the Ottawa Hospital. The Ottawa Hospital's probably the best example of the accountability mechanisms that the Minister of Health has. The Minister of Health can send in a supervisor if he or she is unimpressed with and concerned about the operation of a given hospital.

In fact, the previous Minister of Health, Tony Clement, did have the courage to go in and say that the Ottawa Hospital, with a deficit approaching \$80 million annually—that there were significant concerns and that he was going to take some responsibility. He went in and appointed Dennis Timbrell to supervise the hospital, effectively becoming the board. I can tell you, it was a huge turnaround for the Ottawa Hospital. I thought the most telling example of the success at the Ottawa Hospital—it's the big hospital in Ottawa, with a budget of more than \$500 million. The biggest endorsement we could get for the changes brought about at that hospital is that Dalton McGuinty, when he was Leader of the Opposition, came and did a press conference on the sidewalk in front of the hospital, the big Ottawa Hospital sign in the background. He gave a grade for health care. He had all the institutions, home care and various other hospitals, to whom he gave a grade, but he missed the Ottawa Hospital. He didn't give a grade on the Ottawa Hospital because he knew the hospital had improved immeasurably since Mr Timbrell went in and worked with the administration to change things.

Mr Timbrell appointed Dr Jack Kitts, who had been the vice-president of the hospital, as president. I think having his leadership has made a huge, huge difference. It wasn't a partisan exercise. I think he is a distant relative, relation, to the former member for Renfrew county. He has done a great job. Staff morale has improved incredibly. They appointed a board of directors that I think is far more responsible to the community and more representative of the community. We had members of the board of directors of the Ottawa Hospital saying, "Oh, we'll just keep spending money and the government will have to bail us out." That was not the way it should have been.

It shows that with this government's health care legislation, Bill 8, they have the authority to go in and take over a hospital if they need to. They've got it on the books today. What they want to do is not just have a gun at their disposal; they want to load the gun and point it at the heads of every volunteer hospital board. They want to turn the CEOs of each of our community-based hospitals into employees of the minister. I don't think that's a good idea. I think independent, community-based governance is important. I think it works. I think it has been a good success. I think different concerns—

Interjection.

Mr Baird: The member for Nickel Belt produced a list of all of the hospitals that support Bill 8. Here's the list. It's a blank piece of paper because not one single hospital in Ontario, out of 161 or 163 hospitals, supports

the bill. You have a bill about health care and you have the biggest part of the health care budget—not one single representative of a hospital came forward to say, "I think it's an OK bill." Not even OK; they all think it's bad. Some think it's terrible; some think it's disastrous. Some have said, "This is what the bureaucrats at the Ministry of Health have been planning for years and they finally found a minister crazy enough to bring it into the House and table it." That's unfortunate. I say—

Ms Martel: What did Bernard say?

Mr Baird: I'll come to Bernard in a sec. I look into the TV: If there's anyone at the Hepburn Block watching this in Minister Smitherman's office, you've made a mistake on Bill 8. I say that to those political assistants in Minister Smitherman's office. They've made a terrible mistake. That includes you, Ken, and includes you, Jason. You've made a terrible mistake and you should make changes to that bill when it goes to committee.

I want to congratulate Liz Witmer, who fought to get committee hearings, with the member for Nickel Belt, on Bill 8, where we'll have another round. It was embarrassing. The last round of hearings on this bill—this is how it went. The committee would go to a community, they would set up, they would hear from a presenter who would lambaste the bill. Not one single presenter came before the committee—at least, not in the Hansards that I read—to support the bill. Am I correct, member for Nickel Belt?

Ms Martel: You're right.

Mr Baird: Not a single member of the public came forward and said they supported the bill. We'd hear a presentation and then we'd hear the member from Nipissing, the parliamentary assistant, apologize to every presenter, "We're sorry. We're going to change it. The minister has said he's going to rewrite the entire bill."

1710

Ms Martel: The tone is wrong.

Mr Baird: The tone is wrong, and you wonder.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Nepean-Carleton, the Speaker feels a little left out of the conversation.

Mr Baird: And you wonder why, Speaker. It was embarrassing. They had to send the member from Nipissing to apologize in every community about this bill. They had to apologize, and I was embarrassed for her that she was put in that position. They should have just withdrawn the bill. It wasn't after they had listened to anyone. It was so bad that the first witness was the minister, and he did the big apology. I thought they should have maybe taped the minister's speech or had a video of him apologizing that they could have just played. Then the parliamentary assistant, the member for Nipissing, wouldn't have had to apologize to every single presenter.

The best presentation on that, le meilleur discours sur ce projet de loi, bien sûr, était des présentations par Gisèle Lalonde et Bernard Grandmaître. Gisèle était la présidente d'un groupe à Ottawa, SOS Montfort. M. Bernard Grandmaître, bien sûr le père de la Loi 8, a fait un très bon discours avant la réunion à Ottawa.

C'était une grande surprise pour moi, parce que Bernard Grandmaître était un ancien député libéral, un ancien ministre des Affaires francophones. Il était un des seuls députés libéraux dans cette Chambre qui ont appuyé Dalton McGuinty quand Dalton s'est présenté en tant que chef du Parti libéral. Bernard était bien respecté dans la communauté francophone et dans toute la région de l'est de l'Ontario. Il était un partisan libéral, et je suis tellement choqué.

Je vais lire un discours qu'il a dit. He said, "As a Liberal, I have seen better days. This law, Bill 8, is not the product of the Liberal Party I know. In fact, it is in flagrant contradiction with some of the most basic principles that inspire and have always inspired my party.... This bill is a serious breach of confidence and of democratic principles, and like Mrs Lalonde, it is hard for me to believe that it is done by a Liberal government." Ouch.

Je vais dire que M. Grandmaître, quand il était ici, était le premier député à quitter la salle à cause du projet de loi 26, avant que M. Curling ait été demandé de sortir de la Chambre. Il a fait une grande bataille pour les droits démocratiques dans cette Chambre, et il est absolument extraordinaire qu'un vrai membre du Parti libéral, un vrai partisan, un grand appuieur de M. Dalton McGuinty a fait ce discours.

Aussi, on a écouté M^{me} Gisèle Lalonde. Je l'ai toujours appelée, avec amitié, M^{me} Montfort. Le député de Nickel Belt a dit, «Lisez les commentaires, le discours de M^{me} Lalonde,» et je vais le faire. M^{me} Lalonde n'est pas la présidente de l'hôpital. Elle était une bénévole qui appuyait fortement non seulement les droits des Franco-Ontariens mais aussi l'avenir des institutions franco-ontariennes et, bien sûr, l'hôpital Montfort. Je vais lire ses commentaires.

"It is extremely difficult for Franco-Ontarians to fathom how a Liberal government could even propose to pass a law so draconian, so totalitarian, that it brings back the sad days of the ill-advised and unconstitutional proposed closure of our hospital by the Ontario Health Services Restructuring Commission."

M^{me} Lalonde a fait une très bonne présentation devant le comité du projet de loi 8. On a demandé ce jour pourquoi ne pas arrêter la réunion dans toutes les parties de la province et recommencer avec un nouveau projet de loi. Bien sûr, les députés conservateurs qui étaient à cette réunion et les députés néo-démocratiques—M^{me} Martel était là, et M. Klees a proposé une résolution au comité de quitter les réunions pour demander au ministre de réécrire le projet de loi et de remettre ça ici à la Chambre. Mais il n'a pas pris notre avis, et malheureusement c'est très terrible. Donc, j'ai fait un petit discours en français pour mon cher collègue le député de Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, mon premier discours en français comme député de l'opposition. J'apprécie les commentaires.

That was Bill 8. So when we talk about health care in this throne speech, there is a significant amount of concern about that.

There is one thing I think the throne speech didn't contain. There was so much attention on economic and

taxation issues, so much attention on the alleged deficit of last year, so much attention on health care and education. The real challenge—I say this to all members of the House—is to ensure that other issues don't fall through the cracks, that other issues get attention.

An issue I worked tremendously hard on over the past five years has been the issue—I think it was alluded to by my colleague from Burlington—of helping people with developmental disabilities. There is never going to be a public opinion poll that says developmental disability supports rank up there with taxes, health care and education, but it is every bit as important to this group of vulnerable Ontarians who require the support of their community.

Not all of that should come from government, but certainly government has an important responsibility, particularly with the growing number of elderly seniors who have in many cases aging children themselves who are becoming more high-need. At the very time their loved ones need more support, they are not able to provide it because of declining health. I often talk to many parents in my community about this, and they need day supports, they need residential placements for their loved ones when they are no longer able to provide it, places where they can have confidence their loved ones will be safe and secure when they're not able to provide the care.

There was a five-year plan announced in 2001. I'm going to say that I have confidence the Minister of Finance will continue to fund it. It was a \$197-million initiative phased in over four or five years to increase supports to people with developmental disabilities. I recall that the Minister of Finance when he was a candidate in Vaughan-King-Aurora actually noted that that content of the Flaherty budget was good. Now that he is minister, I strongly believe he will keep that in, and I'll certainly be the first to congratulate him when he does because it is important.

I would tell all members of the House to visit their associations for community living. In Oxford county I had a number of representations from the member for Oxford, and I say to the member for Brant-Haldimand-Norfolk that there is a particularly dynamic group of community living activists and supporters of those with developmental disabilities in his part of the province. The Toronto Association for Community Living is going to have, with other representatives, a developmental disability day in the Legislature, at Queen's Park, some time in May. I would encourage all members to take the time to participate and meet with folks and hear their concerns.

I mentioned briefly, in my two-minute comment to the member for Lambton, the issue of BSE. There are some folks out there who are really hurting, getting a \$1.97 cheque or a \$2.05 cheque for a cow. I'll tell you, the culled cow support not just from the federal government, but from the province if they were going to match with their 40%, would go a long way in dealing with this. This is genuinely an issue where, through no fault of their

own, the markets in the United States have closed. It's completely out of their control. It's not a risk that a business person could reasonably assume. The BSE problem is very significant. It's the last thing they need. I want to congratulate my two colleagues in the House because I know they've been big proponents of this. It is something that is incredibly important.

Also with respect to the throne speech, we can't take our minds off high-tech and economic growth. There are still a lot of people in my community who have been laid off in the high-tech sector who are experiencing difficult times. Job creation and economic growth must continue to play a big part. We have to acknowledge that many of these people's severance and EI are coming to an end. This is a huge concern for some folks and their families who I represent, and I would be remiss if I didn't mention that.

Mr Speaker, I appreciate your regular assistance with helping me and advising me on how to be a better member. I want to thank you for your good attention in the chair. I also want to thank my friend the chief government whip, who is a good friend; I like him, he's a good guy. He's the only whip who has had to whip himself, as we discovered recently, and he did.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): Self-flagellation.

Mr Baird: Self-flagellation, my colleague said. But I look forward to the interventions of all members of the House on this important throne speech debate.

720

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I just want to say how much I enjoyed the presentation, vigorous and lively at that, from the member for Nepean-Carleton. It's amazing how much we can disagree with the government. It's so nice to have him in opposition because on many occasions we sound so alike, in the same way that we sounded so much like the Liberals when they were in opposition. It's an incredible metamorphosis that happens.

I enjoyed his remarks on Bill 8, because the Liberals are just so happy with Bill 8. They just can't wait to go out and trumpet the merits of Bill 8 with the public, with hospital boards, with CEOs, with the world. In fact, when the minister stands up, he talks so wonderfully about Bill 8 and how everybody loves it. Member for Nepean-Carleton, you know and I know that there wasn't one reputation that came before the committee that said, "We love this bill." Not one. But if you listen to the minister, you'd think the whole world out there loves Bill 8.

It was so good to see mon ami Monsieur Grandmaître, because he was a former minister with the Liberals in the good old days and he was a member of the opposition when he was here, and just to hear him come before the committee as a deputant to say, "This law, Bill 8, is not a product of the Liberal Party that I know"—you understand, he doesn't know the Liberal Party any longer. He doesn't recognize it. You've changed, is what he is saying. "In fact, it is in flagrant contradiction to some of

the most basic principles that inspire and have always inspired my party," he said. He doesn't recognize you folks any longer. It's not me saying that, it's your friend Monsieur Grandmaître saying that about you and your friends. It's sad.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I was listening to the member for Nepean-Carleton a few minutes ago. Let me tell you that the McGuinty government is committed to giving the best hospital services to all Ontarians—anglophones, francophones, Italians and Lebanese—everyone in this province.

But this is not what you did when you tried to close down the Montfort Hospital. When you say the Montfort Hospital was not too pleased about Bill 8, it's probably people like you who tried to convince them to go against it, because I was speaking to the Montfort Hospital and they seem to be satisfied. They have misinterpreted the regulation.

Interjection.

Mr Lalonde: Definitely. You tried to close CHEO, the cardiac clinic. We said that we will keep it open.

There are 161 hospitals in Ontario and we want every one of them to be accountable, not to come up with the surprise we are faced with at the present time: \$800 million not accounted for. We want every hospital administrator to be more accountable. There are definitely some times that hospitals have some unpredicted expenses. But it is easy to grab the phone and call the minister's office. The minister will understand immediately, if you can justify the reason.

But the big problem with this was that people were telling the unions that if Bill 8 goes through, you'll be losing your job—the clerical staff and other staff were going to lose their jobs. These are the calls I have been getting all the time. This is completely false. You tried to convince the other people to go against Bill 8. We have a good Bill 8 that will be accountable for everyone in this province.

Mr Jackson: I want to thank my colleague the member for Nepean-Carleton for his spirited and bilingual presentation on—what are we talking about, the budget?

Interjections: Throne speech.

Mr Jackson: The speech from the throne, exactly. I had to remind myself there.

My colleague raised some very important points about Bill 8, and I too would like to echo his concerns. They have been presented by the Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital in Burlington. They are extremely concerned about the implications of Bill 8. The medical staff in that fine facility, whether it is the front-line nursing staff or whether it was CUPE staff that work in that hospital, whether they are providing pharmaceutical supports or additional medical supports, to a person have expressed concern with Bill 8. They have every good reason to, because there was a promise made by the Liberal government that they would pay down the deficits of the hospitals, as we have in the past and as previous governments have. But apparently, all of a sudden this was one of the health care promises that the new Liberal

government was unwilling to honour and unwilling to keep. That is truly tragic.

You can appreciate why members on this side of the House are so concerned about the implications that Bill 8 has for doctors, nurses and all medical professionals, as well as the volunteer hospital board members. There are other issues of concern that were raised by my colleague, certainly seniors, with the threat by the government to begin a major change to the drug benefit program. Rather than going after the federal government for our fair share of the health dollars, they seem to want to go after seniors to get them to pay more money for their health services. That's quite unacceptable.

Ms Martel: I appreciated the comments that were made by the member for Nepean-Carleton. I know when the member gets back to Ottawa he's going to call up Mr Grandmaître and he's going to say that Mr Grandmaître's former colleague Mr Lalonde said he misinterpreted the legislation. Misinterpreted the legislation? Mr Lalonde, what are you talking about? I was at the public hearings. I heard hospital board after hospital board come forward and condemn this government for the arbitrary powers it has under this bill to take over hospital boards, to unilaterally issue orders, to unilaterally issue compliance directives, to claw back the pay, the compensation of CEOs who aren't employees of the Ministry of Health. They are employees of these local boards.

You know what? It wasn't just Mr Grandmaître from Montfort Hospital who had something to say. The member for Carleton-Nepean talked about a M^{me} Chrétien. Michelle de Courville Nicol, who's the past chair of the Montfort Hospital board of trustees, said the following: "We changed governments. We changed the flavour of the month. Now it's accountability and it is imposed with a law so draconian, so totalitarian that it rivals in scope with the powers that were ceded to the restructuring commission by the previous regime"—except this time it's the minister who seeks to increase his own power over hospitals and over the communities they serve. Maybe Michelle de Courville Nicol has misinterpreted the legislation too. Maybe she doesn't understand. Maybe she hasn't read it. The only person who hasn't read it is Mr Lalonde. If he had read the amended bill, he clearly would have seen all the provisions in the new bill that continue to give the minister the unilateral power to impose orders and compliance directives. There's nothing negotiated about accountability agreements. They're going to be imposed by this government.

The Deputy Speaker: The member has two minutes to reply.

Mr Baird: I want to thank the members for Trinity-Spadina, Nickel Belt, Glengarry-Prescott-Russell and Burlington for their comments. About Bill 8, I say to those people at the Ministry of Health—Jason, Ken, Thomas—are you listening? I don't think you've sold anyone on your bill.

Je veux dire à mon cher collègue le député de Glengarry-Prescott-Russell que si M. Grandmaître ne

connaît pas le projet de loi, il entend beaucoup les députés néo-démocratiques et conservateurs. Tous les syndicats dans la province attendent maintenant l'avis du Parti conservateur sur ce projet de loi. Chaque conseil d'administration dans chaque hôpital dans toutes les régions de la province se trompe, et le gouvernement est correct. Bien sûr je suis tout seul.

Je veux dire que c'est une bonne idée de regarder les Hansard de toutes les présentations faites devant le comité où on a discuté de ce projet de loi. Il n'y avait personne, pas une seule personne dans n'importe quelle ville, dans toute la province, qui a présenté en faveur du projet de loi 8. Il n'y avait aucune personne, dans n'importe quelle région, qui a dit, « Oui, on appuie le projet de loi. » Il n'y avait aucun hôpital, aucun médecin, aucune infirmière, aucun avocat pour la santé publique qui a dit, « On est d'accord avec ce projet de loi. » C'est absolument extraordinaire; c'est sans précédent. C'est quelque chose que—je vais le dire en anglais.

The powers in Bill 8 would make Mike Harris blush.

I do appreciate the other comments on the bill. We're going to continue to be here fighting for new school construction in growing communities like Stittsville and South Nepean. We're going to continue to fight for health care spending for hospitals with growing populations and for vulnerable people like those with developmental disabilities.

1730

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Niagara Centre.

Ms Martel: Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, I'm sorry. I hadn't been informed of the rotation. The member for Nickel Belt.

Ms Martel: I know, Speaker, it's late on a Wednesday afternoon.

It's a pleasure for me to participate in this debate, because I want to focus on some of the broken promises of the Liberal government. There are four that I'm going to talk about in the 20 minutes I have. That will take us to 6 pm.

Interjection.

Ms Martel: I only have 20 minutes. I'm sure I could go on at great length, Mr Marchese, but I'm just going to focus on four. I'm sure that you, in your comments, will have more to say about those as well.

The first one has to do with the promise made by Dalton McGuinty to end P3 hospitals. I want to go back to the quotes that were made by the Premier before the election when he was out trolling for votes from the Ontario electorate. This is what Mr McGuinty had to say about P3 hospitals: "What I take issue with is the mechanism. We believe in public ownership and public financing (of health care). I will take these hospitals and bring them inside the public sector," said Dalton McGuinty to the Ottawa Citizen, Wednesday, May 28, 2003.

In the same article: "Mr McGuinty believes that public-private sector partnerships in health care would ultimately cost the province more money than traditional

arrangements. He says such arrangements would be discontinued."

That's what Mr McGuinty said before the election. After the election he went to Brampton and Ottawa and reannounced the P3 arrangements that essentially had been negotiated by the previous Conservative government. We've moved from a Conservative lease to a Liberal mortgage, but Mr McGuinty has not brought this into the public sector and has not, as he promised, ensured that these hospitals will be publicly financed. And the people in Brampton and Ottawa are going to pay more as a result of this broken promise.

You see, traditionally the province would borrow the funding necessary for hospital construction and hospital renewal and the province would use capital grants to the hospital to pay for that construction. Now the Liberals, just like the Tories, propose that a private sector consortium will build the hospital. The private sector consortium will go out, borrow the money and build the hospital, and the hospital will be stuck with a mortgage. That mortgage, year in and year out, will be paid through the operating grant of the hospital. That is an operating grant that should be used to pay for patient services and programs in the hospital, not to finance capital construction.

So we've got a complete change in the traditional way we're going to finance these two schemes, despite what Mr McGuinty promised, and we're going to see the taxpayers get dinged for more dollars, because Mr McGuinty is right: It is going to cost the taxpayers more. It's going to cost the taxpayers more because government gets the lowest and best interest rate for financing, especially a project of this magnitude. So we're going to pay more interest because it costs the private sector more to borrow. But we're also going to pay more because the private sector is not going to do this work for free. It's not a charity case. This is a business matter and they're in business to make a profit. Their aim is to take maybe a 5% or 20% profit—if they can get it that high—on this job. So the taxpayers are going to pay more because now we've got to pay for the profit of the private sector consortium that is doing the work.

New Democrats are opposed to P3 hospitals. The hospitals in Brampton and Ottawa should be built through public financing, just like Mr McGuinty promised before the election. In that way, money that is now, under the scheme incorporated by the Liberals, going to go into the pockets of the for-profit consortium would instead go to patient care and programs in the hospitals, where it belongs. We're going to pay more, and we have the first example I'm going to relate today of a broken promise. Very clearly, it's going to cost taxpayers more. If we were the government, we would be building that with public financing, because we have some of the lowest rates in 45 years in the province. We should be making these kinds of investments, not paying profit to a private sector consortium to do the job that government should be doing.

The second promise Mr McGuinty made, and this has to do with private health care as well, has to do with his

promise on the private, for-profit CT scan and MRI clinics. Here's what the government said in the health document they used in the ramp-up to the election:

"The Harris-Eves government opened private, two-tier MRI and CT clinics. These clinics will sell" a variety of "scans alongside public services, giving quicker access to those who can afford to buy their way to the front of the line.

"We will cancel the Harris-Eves private clinics and replace them with public services. The Romanow commission proved there is no evidence to support expanding private diagnostic services.

"Many communities have already raised money for a new MRI or CT for their local hospital, but have been denied operating funds by the Harris-Eves government. Instead of opening private clinics, we will work with these communities to expand access in the public system."

Here we are, six months after the election. Has the Liberal government closed the private, for-profit MRI and CT clinics? No. Has the Liberal government announced funding to expand public MRIs in a publicly funded hospital system? No. Has the Liberal government broken yet another promise on health care? Yes; absolutely.

They were very clear. They were going to cancel, shut down, end, terminate the for-profit clinics. And here we are six months later and they're still operating. I remember the health critic for the Liberal party, Ms Papatello, saying these should be shut down because the private, for-profit MRI clinics were going to poach technicians from the publicly funded hospital system, and that would make the wait in the hospital system even longer.

She was right. That's exactly what happened. That's happening right in her community in Windsor. We had an example of that in a deputation on Bill 8. That's exactly what happened. The private clinics are poaching dedicated people from the public system. Where is she now? I haven't heard her talk about shutting down these clinics. I haven't heard her stand in her place and encourage her colleague who sits beside her in the front row, the Minister of Health, to shut these down, just like they promised when they were in opposition. How times change. That was then and this is now.

It was good enough to go out before the election to troll for votes. The campaign is over and the Liberals promised change. The Liberals promised some pretty specific changes with respect to this promise, but where has that promise gone? It's now six months. Maybe the minister is doing something about this; I don't know. It's hard to imagine, because if this was a priority, then this would have been done very early on after the government's election. If this was a priority, the minister would have said in the throne speech, "Imminently, immediately, tomorrow we're going to cancel the private, for-profit MRI clinics."

I didn't hear him say that. I didn't hear the Lieutenant Governor say that in the speech from the throne that was written by the Liberal government. That's because I think

they have no intention of shutting down the private, for-profit clinics. I think that's what's really happening.

1740

What a shame, because Mr Romanow went out for 18 months and talked to Ontarians, talked to Canadians, and came back and said very clearly: "There is no compelling evidence from the for-profit health care industry that private, for-profit health care either provides more efficient health care, more effective health care or health care that results in better health outcomes," no evidence at all. Yet you've got the government in the preamble to Bill 8 coming forward and pretending to be supportive of medicare, pretending to be supportive of Mr Romanow. But in reality, the private, for-profit MRI clinics that Mr McGuinty promised to shut down are still operating. As they continue to operate, more professionals will be poached from the public system and more money that should be going to patient care will instead go into the profits of those for-profit operators. Shame on the government for yet another broken promise on health care.

Let me move on to the broken promise on hydro rates. Just on April 1—oh, so recently—the government's legislation to raise the cap on hydro went into effect. As of April 1, the rate frozen at 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour is going up to 4.7 cents for the first 750 kilowatt hours used in a month, and after that the rate is going up to 5.5 cents.

What did Mr McGuinty say about hydro rates before the election? Let me give you just a few quotes. Here was Mr McGuinty on Focus Ontario, November 23, 2002: "I think the most important thing to do at this particular point in time is to put a cap on those rates through to 2006."

Here is the Ontario Liberal plan for hydro, released in September 2003, entitled "Hydro You Can Trust." Catch this: "We will keep the price cap in place until 2006."

Hydro you can trust? Please. What about me trusting McGuinty when he said he was going to keep the rates in place? What about all those Ontarians who put their trust in Premier McGuinty when he said during the election campaign, "We will keep the rates in place"? Please. Trust? My goodness. People voted for change and they got more of the same. No wonder they're not trusting this government when it comes to keeping election promises.

Here is some more: "The Liberals, meanwhile, frontrunners in the polls, vow to maintain the rate cap at 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour until 2006—the same timeline the Tories have promised." That was in the London Free Press, September 30, 2003.

Here is more: "McGuinty also said he would keep a rate cap in place until 2006 and keep hydro in public hands"—Broadcast News, September 29, 2003. In public hands? Please. Now we've got the government talking about building more nuclear stations and inviting the private sector to do that. Where did the promise go about keeping hydro public?

Here's another one from the Toronto Sun, September 6, 2003: "[McGuinty] said the 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour freeze on rates will go sometime after 2006....

"It's going to add to the hydro debt and if there was another way around it, I would be delighted to entertain it. It's going to have to come out of rates. It's going to be like a mortgage and we will have to pay it a little longer."

People believed Mr McGuinty when he went around the province before and during the election. They believed he was going to keep the rate cap in place. Even Mr McGuinty said, "Yes, we may have to pay for it, but we can do that through a mortgage"—something like the mortgage at the P3 hospitals—"but we're going to bite the bullet and do that." Before the election, a very specific promise; after the election, gone.

It was astonishing to see the excuse the Minister of Energy, Mr Duncan, used to try to justify why the government was going to get rid of the rate cap. He said, "We didn't know it was costing so much to keep the rate cap in place. We didn't understand that it was costing so much and that we were subsidizing these rates." For goodness' sake, who is he trying to kid? When the previous government brought in the legislation to cap rates—because hydro privatization is such a fiasco that of course rates haven't gone down; they went through the roof—in the fall of 2002, Mr McGuinty said the following when the Conservatives brought in the rate cap. He described it as "an attempt to bribe us with our own money." And two days later he voted in favour of the bill.

Flip-flop, flop-flip. One thing one day; one thing the next. Wherever public opinion is, that's where Mr McGuinty is. When the Tories brought in the rate cap, he said they were trying to buy them off with their own money. Then the Liberals voted in favour of it. Last session we saw the government changing its mind once again and moving the cap up.

Hydro privatization and deregulation hasn't worked. If it did, we wouldn't have to have a price cap, because everybody's rates would be going down, not through the roof. What the rate caps prove is that we need to go back to public hydro, but what the most current change on April 1 proves is that you really can't trust Mr McGuinty when he makes a promise. It was good enough before the election, and after the election they have all kinds of excuses about how they didn't know, when they surely did. Everybody knew it was costing \$800 million to keep the rate cap in place, including Dalton McGuinty.

The final issue I want to raise has to do with autism. From a personal perspective, this has got to be one of the most shameful breaking of promises this government has made since it took office. People know that I have been advocating for these parents for over two years now. What I find shameful about the broken promise is that when the Tories were over there in government and the Liberals sat over here, when I raised questions about discrimination against autistic children over age six, the Minister of Children and Youth Services and other Liberals called it like it was: discrimination. They criticized, they condemned, they were just as critical as I of the previous government's policy with respect to these children.

Mr McGuinty, during the election campaign, wrote a letter to Nancy Morrison, who has twins. Her five-year-old son Sean has autism. She wanted to know the Liberal Party position with respect to children over the age of six and ongoing services. Mr McGuinty wrote Nancy Morrison, parent of an autistic child, the following letter:

"I also believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory. The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six."

That's what he said during the election. I can tell you that the Bouffords, who were here the other day from London, voted Liberal specifically because of that promise. Their son Jordan turned six on May 8, and his IBI treatment is going to be arbitrarily cut off by this government, even though two of the specialists he works with say he needs to continue with IBI treatment.

It is discrimination. It is immoral that a government would discriminate against some of its youngest and most vulnerable citizens. It was wrong under the Conservatives and it's wrong now under the Liberals. I resent that the Minister of Children and Youth Services, whom I like as an individual and who I hoped was going to make a change, would stand in her place and parrot the same pathetic, sick excuse that the former minister, Brenda Elliott, used to give when I raised these questions. She got up in this House the two times I've raised the question this session about autistic children and said, "We've consulted with experts and the experts say there is no evidence that this works in children after the age of six."

I have a copy of a court transcript here dated December 9, 2003. On that day in the court case where 29 families are trying to sue the government to get the IBI that their kids need, Mary Eberts, who was representing the plaintiffs, cross-examined a government witness. The government witness was Dr Adrienne Perry, who was one of the individuals responsible for setting up the IBI program in the first place. She was there as a government witness.

Mary Eberts said to her, "So could you tell me what is the empirical basis for cutting off IBI on a child's sixth birthday in the experimental literature?" Adrienne Perry said, "I'd say there is not an empirical basis for that particular decision, nor for the decisions about duration. As I said in my report, there's no very good evidence on that question in general." That's what Dr Adrian Perry said, one of the people responsible for establishing this program. Why would the minister say her experts are telling her that this doesn't work?

1750

The minister also, in the question that I did this week, referred to a Mr Ron Scarfone, vice-president of the London chapter of the Autism Society. She says it's "absolutely the right thing to do. We are moving in the right direction." Do you know what? The parents who were here the other day called Mr Scarfone, wanting to know why he was in support of discrimination against their children, and he said very clearly that he can't believe that the minister is referencing him in this regard,

that he in no way, shape or form supports cutting off IBI services for children over six. That's what he said.

I want this government to do the right thing. I want the government to live up to the promise Mr McGuinty made: End the discrimination against autistic children over the age of six.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to put on the record some things that the member might not remember in terms of the throne speech, in terms of the previous government. In eight years they never, ever raised the minimum wage. We did it. We raised the minimum wage. They fired meat inspectors; we've hired them again. We've not resisted, as the previous government did time and time again, to get to the bottom of Ipperwash; we're doing an inquiry. They used energy as a political football; we're actually taking action on the pricing, which as the members opposite know, I'm concerned about. The people of Ontario realize that the price cap is something that was artificial, and that eventually we're going to have to own up to the fact that we would have added billions of dollars, not just the \$800 million that was spent, on to the debt.

We also took away that mask of question marks, right across the board, about budgets. The reality is, the \$5.6-billion budget was way more than a \$5.6-billion budget, because the previous government didn't want anybody else to know that there are the CASs, hospitals and school boards. There are a tremendous number of other institutions and, inside of budgets, that still means that it came from the same taxpayer. So we're going to put the flashlight in the deep, dark corners of government and start to make them transparent.

The other thing was recommended by the former auditor, Mr Peters, who, I suggest to you—and I don't know that anyone would argue with this point and I hope we will put this to work. We're going to make sure that budgets no longer get messed up.

Mr Baird: I want to congratulate the member for Nickel Belt, who made an excellent presentation of all the broken promises that Dalton McGuinty has perpetrated on the people in the province of Ontario. I listened with great interest to her comments about children with autism. I can remember that member, the now Minister of Children, harassing me, as Minister of Social Services, on the age six thing. At least I can say—and one of the parents actually said to me, "At least you were honest." We disagreed, but we had one opinion before the election and another after the election. We didn't make promises to parents of autistic children to get their vote, and then not deliver.

I think that speaks volumes to the ethical standards of this government, to say to young children with autism and their parents, "We will give you this therapy if you vote for us and if we're elected," only not to deliver. That is probably one of the most shameful attempts to get people's votes that I have ever seen in politics. To misrepresent a position is unconscionable. It's absolutely unconscionable to say to autistic children and their

parents, "If we're elected, we'll do this," get their votes and then not deliver. It is one of the most disgraceful conducts that I've seen in all of my years in politics.

I've had one position on this. The member for Nickel Belt has had one position on this. We can have an honest disagreement, but at least we are honest. At least we never have lied to children who are autistic.

The Deputy Speaker: There'll be further questions and comments, but I like to keep the word "lied" out of the Legislature as often as I can.

Mr Marchese: I want to congratulate my colleague from Nickel Belt for a strong presentation of a list of broken Liberal promises. I remind those watching that this is the party that before the election said the following: "We've got \$7 billion worth of promises. We're signing on to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation's pledge: no new taxes." We were all aware, including the now Chair of Management Board, that there was at least a \$4-billion deficit, but the now Chair of Management Board knew then that it was approximately \$5 billion. We knew that.

We also heard the Liberals say, "We're going to balance the budget." No new taxes; \$7 billion worth of promises; we've got a deficit to deal with that we're aware of, and they said, with the alchemy that only Liberals can conjure, "We will balance the budget." That's why it didn't take long, you understand, folks watching this political channel, after the day they got elected that they would of course break each and every one of the promises except a few. Of course they wouldn't keep the private-public partnership that my colleague talked about; their commitment to public MRIs; keeping the cap on hydro rates until 2006; keeping the promise on autism, to expand it beyond age six; reducing the rates on Highway 407; that they were going to cancel the 6,000 homes that were going to be built on the Oak Ridges moraine—they couldn't keep any of those promises and we knew it. It didn't take long.

What we now have is permanent change. You got the change the Liberals wanted, but you probably never suspected that the change would be ongoing and that the promises would be broken. You never expected it and that's what you got, and you're going to get a heck of a lot more in the years to come.

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): It's unfortunate for the members who are here today and for the public watching that instead of a serious treatment of a serious problem, we get high dudgeon on the cheap. We get members of the third party wrapped in righteous wrath on behalf of somebody. Then we get the member opposite, from Nepean-Carleton, wrapped in something else. Let me tell you, it smells a little worse than the righteousness wafting over from the other side.

Let's look at the issue at hand. We're talking about 6,800 kids in school right now that, if the two parties opposite were being the least bit honest, they would say they didn't have the answers to when they were in government; 6,800 kids who have been diagnosed with autism who are trying to be reached out to right now. We

have a Minister of Children and Youth Services being honest with this House and saying, "We will take the resources direct to those children and we will provide for those children a better outcome than they get." We have a member opposite taking up the time of this House, not with solutions, not with hope for those families, not with some kind of answer to the angst they feel, but instead trying to twist what she said was said on the campaign trail.

This government has put forward \$40 million. That \$40 million will govern the \$140 million that we're also dedicating to those kids in school. What the members in this House have an obligation to do—because there's not a representative in this House who does not have families in their constituency who have sat across the desk from them—every one of us has an obligation to work with them for a better outcome for those kids.

For the member opposite to say, "I don't wish to impugn the integrity of the member who holds the ministerial seat," and then to go ahead and do that is frankly beneath the situation. What we need instead is a serious outlook that says, "We all are going to work together to solve this problem." The commitment is there; the dollars are there. It's time for some honest talk to come with it in this House.

The Deputy Speaker: Before the member for Nickel Belt has the opportunity for her two minutes, I really am getting a little concerned about the word "lie" that I hear float back and forth. I really think we should temper our language.

The member for Nickel Belt has two minutes to reply.

Ms Martel: I would say to the Minister of Education that what you and your government should do is keep your promise.

This is what your Premier said. You listen to what your Premier said to a mother who has an autistic child. This is what Dalton McGuinty said: "I also believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory. The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six."

You broke your promise. Your Minister of Children and Youth Services 10 days ago stood up in a public announcement and said that you weren't going to end the discrimination against kids over six. You're as bad as the Tories.

You explain to Jordan Boufford, when he turns six on May 8, why it's OK that his government, your government, is going to discriminate against him and arbitrarily cut off his IBI treatment. You explain to Lucas Burrows, who's eight, who had his treatment cut off, why your government thinks it's OK to discriminate against children over the age of six. You explain that.

It was your government and your Premier who said you were going to end the discrimination, and you haven't. Your conduct is shameful. Your breaking of this promise to parents with children over the age of six is shameful. You've got your lawyers down in court at the—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms Martel: You are paying thousands of dollars on a court case trying to ensure parents don't get what they deserve. Explain to all those—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Will the member for Nickel Belt take her seat? The member for Nickel Belt, if you don't take your seat—and the member for Nepean-Carleton, if he will stop banging his desk. The member for Oxford, you're not even in your seat, so you shouldn't be doing anything. Thank you.

On December 11, 2003, Ms Mossop moved, seconded by Mr Qaadri, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

“To the Honourable James K. Bartleman:

“We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now

assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has addressed to us.”

All those in favour of Ms Mossop's motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

“Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening session be deferred until Thursday, April 8.” This is moved by Dave Levac, chief government whip.

This will then be deferred until Thursday, April 8.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1804.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Alvin Curling

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Ancaster-Dundas-	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton East / -Est	Vacant
Flamborough-Aldershot		Hamilton Mountain	Boutrogianni, Hon / L'hon Marie (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative		
Beaches-East York /	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Marsales, Judy (L)
Beaches-York-Est		Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon / L'hon Leona (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Huron-Bruce	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Springdale		Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND)
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Kingston and the Islands /	Gerretsen, Hon / L'hon John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Brampton West-Mississauga /	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Kingston et les îles	
Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga			
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Milloy, John (L)
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	London North Centre /	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint	London Centre-Nord	
		London West / -Ouest	Bentley, Hon / L'hon Christopher (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	London-Fanshawe	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-	Eves, Ernie (PC) Leader of the opposition / chef de l'opposition	Markham	Wong, Tony C. (L)
Grey	O'Toole, John (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Takhar, Hon / L'hon Harinder S. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Durham	Colle, Mike (L)		
Eglinton-Lawrence		Mississauga East / -Est	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Hon / L'hon Steve (L) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation	Mississauga South / -Sud	Peterson, Tim (L)
		Mississauga West / -Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Nepean-Carleton	Baird, John R. (PC)
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
		Niagara Falls	Craitor, Kim (L)
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Brotten, Laurel C. (L)	Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Watson, Hon / L'hon Jim (L) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon / L'hon Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ottawa-Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Meilleur, Hon / L'hon Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Hon / L'hon Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, Hon / L'hon George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Toronto-Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Sorbara, Hon / L'hon Greg (L) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Yakubuski, John (PC)	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Simcoe-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Jim (PC)
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Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Thursday 8 April 2004

Jeudi 8 avril 2004



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 8 April 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 8 avril 2004

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

ELDER ABUSE PREVENTION DAY

Mr David Zimmer (Willowdale): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should commit itself to an annual Elder Abuse Prevention Day, fixing a date where the government, its agencies, communities, professional and business organizations and service providers can communicate a clear and consistent message and foster substantive awareness and learning around protecting our senior citizens.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr. Zimmer has moved private member's resolution number 10. Pursuant to standing order 96, the member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Zimmer: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this resolution. Let me address some comments as to why I think this resolution is needed, why this resolution is important and why members of this House should support this resolution. Elder abuse is one of the last silent issues in our society that needs attention, that needs to be attended to. It's the last unmentionable issue, along with child abuse and spousal abuse. It is an issue that needs attention.

The first step in recognizing or dealing with the issue, I submit to you, is awareness of the issue in all its facets. Issue awareness in the past has done a tremendous amount to bring forward the issues of child abuse, cancer treatment, spousal abuse and the awareness issues surrounding the treatment of Alzheimer's disease. So becoming aware of an issue and its effects and manifestations is really the first step in addressing the issue. That's what I'm proposing today: that we adopt an Elder Abuse Prevention Day as a first step in generating awareness of this last unmentionable issue. Let me give you some facts surrounding this issue, just to keep it in context.

In Ontario, there are 1.5 million senior citizens. There are credible studies that indicate that 4% to 10% of that seniors' population—that's 60,000 to 100,000—suffer some type of abuse. The abuse itself can occur in many forms. The principal form, the obvious form of elder abuse, is physical abuse, and we've all read about and perhaps we all know about situations of physical elder

abuse. A less obvious abuse, but just as crying out for correction, is the whole issue of neglected seniors, which in itself contemplates abuse. There's financial abuse of seniors; that's akin to fraud. There are unscrupulous commercial entities and unscrupulous relatives taking advantage of seniors, taking advantage of their assets, their bank accounts and their properties. The more subtle and indeed more taxing form of elder abuse is the whole issue of the emotional abuse of elders.

Those same studies that give that statistic of 4% to 10% of seniors suffering abuse go on to point out that 68% of the abusers of elders are family members; 32% are non-family members. If we break down the study, it tells us that of the family abusers, about 30% are abused at the hands of a spouse and, shockingly, 50% of elders suffer abuse at the hands of their adult children. Some 18% of seniors who suffer from abuse are males and, shamefully and shockingly, 38% are female seniors.

Abusers often are aware of what they are doing, but there is a whole component of the abusers of seniors who just aren't aware that their conduct, their emotional relationship with seniors, their financial relationship with seniors, constitutes an abuse. An awareness program will go a long way to make those people aware of the effect of their actions on seniors and to point out that in fact many of those actions constitute a form of abuse.

Awareness, then, is always the first step in correcting a situation that needs correcting. If you're not aware of it, you can't begin to address it, and I come back to the examples that I pointed out earlier: the great success that awareness programs have had in dealing with child abuse, spousal abuse, the treatment of cancer, cancer awareness programs, the treatment of Alzheimer's, awareness surrounding Alzheimer's programs.

What does awareness mean? Awareness programs have to recognize in this case of elder abuse all of the various forms of elder abuse: clearly the obvious, the subtle forms of elder abuse and the hidden forms of elder abuse. This resolution is a first step in raising that level of awareness.

Let me tell you a poignant story which I think captures the whole issue of senior abuse. A number of years ago an elderly woman passed away. A few months after her death, her diary was found; she was in the habit of keeping a diary. In her last diary entry, which she wrote a couple of days before she died, she wrote these words: "These years have been wasted ones, ones of degradation, of not belonging, of muted feelings."

Members, this resolution is a step toward ensuring that seniors have their golden years and not ones of

degradation, of not belonging, of muted feelings. I urge all members to support this resolution.

1010

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's a pleasure to rise today. In fact, I will be supporting the member from Willowdale's resolution. I think that anything any political party or government can do toward raising more awareness of something like seniors' abuse is certainly important to the almost 1.5 million seniors we have in the province of Ontario. I know in his first few comments, he mentioned that it was very silent. The fact of the matter is, I really don't agree with that. I think there is already a lot of awareness of it, and I'm going to point out some of those, if I may.

I'd like to say that for four years now I've had seniors' days in my riding. We bring awareness to things such as all the services that are available to seniors in our community. We even invite the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat to come. They're always great. They send staff people up to my seniors' days and they talk about issues like seniors' awareness and elder abuse.

The Ontario Provincial Police has a strategy in place. They have a special division of the Ontario Provincial Police, and I think they do an excellent job. Those folks at the Ontario Provincial Police like to go out and visit seniors' organizations. They go to seniors' days in MPPs' areas. They're out there adamantly promoting this particular branch of the OPP, trying to promote the fact that elder abuse is there and they have all kinds of solutions to help with that.

I think we all have probably at one time or another encountered someone who has suffered elder abuse. Of the key points the speaker mentioned already, I think financial elder abuse is probably the biggest problem they find. We often see that. Sometimes it's even in families, where families use older members of their families and rip them off for money. We've actually seen cases of that. Telemarketing is another one. It's terrible how some of these telemarketers have created scams that hurt our seniors as well.

I'd like to put a few people's names on the record who have worked toward elder abuse in a very dynamic way in my riding. Two people, Mrs Shirley Dmytruk and Mrs Marie Smith, are both members of United Senior Citizens of Ontario who are continually out across the province. These are ladies who are well into their senior years, and they travel right across our province talking to all kinds of senior citizens' groups and bringing elder abuse forward.

I should just quickly comment, is it ever nice that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and minister responsible for seniors is here this morning. I didn't expect you to be here and I want to compliment you for coming here and listening to these comments on elder abuse. I hope you're listening very carefully, Mr Minister. I hope you're not over there talking about green-belts all the time, but are listening to the senior citizens as well.

It's important that I also mention some of the folks in the west end of my riding: Mr George Lawrence, Rosita

des Roches from Lafontaine, John McLaughlin from the seniors' awareness group right in the city of Orillia. Once a month on Wednesday they meet with a guest speaker and they do exactly what Mr Zimmer's trying to do with his bill, and that's talk about bringing awareness to seniors on all types of issues, whether it's market value assessment issues or issues around elder abuse. It's really important that we mention these people in our comments because it's important that we bring awareness to seniors about elder abuse.

I'd like to comment on a couple of little things that our government did when we were in power and that I hope the new government will continue. I know that in March 2002, Premier Eves at the time committed \$4.3 million, including 10 new specially trained staff, to an elder abuse strategy to address and prevent the abuse of seniors. Of course, you are all very familiar that a lot of the abuse can take place in the health care industry. One of the areas we found in 1995 when we came to power was the lack of long-term-care beds. As you know, there have been over 20,000 beds allocated across the province. Many have opened up in many of your ridings. I'm sure that as very hard-working constituency men, you people all go and visit these homes, and if you haven't been to each one in your riding, you should go, and I'm sure at some point you will. I think those 20,000 new long-term-care beds have helped the health care industry a lot in elder abuse as well.

The Ontario drug benefit plan has added 1,436 drugs to its formulary since 1995 and now covers over 3,200 drug products. Seniors are the largest group of drug consumers and comprise as much as 89% of the benefits of that program. As you know, we are very concerned about some of the comments that have been made by the Minister of Finance and by members of your party about the possibility of working on that program and reducing the number of drugs that are covered and who would actually be eligible. We have a real problem with that. I know that you have received a number of concerns, a number of complaints, over the last few months since that trial balloon was floated out there.

But there are a few things. Although I support the bill, I find it ironic that this government would bring out a bill like this, because in a lot of ways you've hurt seniors.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): It's not a bill.

Mr Dunlop: I'm sorry, the resolution. I think of the seniors' tax credit that you took away; the average amount of that rebate for seniors was \$475. You took \$475 out of the pockets of our senior citizens in this province. I'm disappointed. We passed that legislation. You rolled it back with Bill 4, and I can tell you that hurt senior citizens. That hurt a lot of our senior citizens in the province. They were counting on that. We had numerous calls to our office, asking when the applications would be available, when they would actually have an opportunity to receive that money back, and they certainly didn't come through with that. You rolled it back and you hurt seniors to the tune of \$475 a household or about \$400

million that would have gone back into the pockets of senior citizens in Ontario. I'm not happy with that, I know the senior citizens of the province are not happy with that, and I know that a number of the members of your caucus in the Liberal Party will not be happy with that as well.

Removing the hydro cap: Talk about elder abuse. The most vulnerable people in our society, and you took the hydro cap off, something you promised to leave in place until 2006, and we don't have it. Now they're vulnerable out there. It's something that we on this side of the House were committed to leaving in place until 2006. You've obviously broken a promise with that one, because you went across the province telling everybody that you would leave the hydro cap in place until 2006. You weren't in here an hour and you started fooling around with that. That's sad, and the senior citizens of the province won't forget that. Although this trial balloon of an Elder Abuse Prevention Day obviously is a good idea, it will not deflect the criticism that you've received about that.

I mentioned also the drug benefit plan and how they're going to tamper with that. We fully expect that you will try to tamper with that. That is also elder abuse to the senior citizens of Ontario.

A couple of my colleagues would like to say a few words as well, but I do want to thank you for the opportunity this morning. I will be supporting this resolution, but I wanted to put those comments on record. I believe that they had to be brought forward at this point, because I don't believe this government, the Dalton McGuinty government, is very supportive of our seniors.

1020

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I want to thank the honourable member for bringing this resolution forward, first of all. Just to rebut something that the previous speaker stated, it's interesting to note that the nine seniors' organizations with which the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat work on a continual basis all supported the government's idea of cancelling the seniors' tax credit, provided that the money that represents would go into seniors' services. So that's where they stand. They would rather have it in services than in tax cuts.

Elder abuse is an issue that our government, the McGuinty government, takes very seriously. We are pleased to implement the Ontario strategy to combat elder abuse, the first strategy of its kind in Canada. Giving credit where credit is due, it was the previous government that initiated that about five years ago. Other jurisdictions have looked at our comprehensive strategy as a model.

The strategy focuses on three priorities: coordination of local services, training of front-line staff and public education. The strategy is being led by the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat, the Ministry of the Attorney General and our community partner, the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse.

The establishment of a fixed annual day recognizing elder abuse would certainly support our public education

and awareness efforts to raise awareness of this growing problem. As has already been mentioned, there are over 1.5 million seniors in this province. We live in an aging society. Our population base will contain more seniors in years to come.

Nearly all of them live in the community. Ontario seniors deserve to live safely, with dignity and as independently as possible, with the supports they need. The vast majority of older adults, who live independently and are supported by their families, friends and community programs, or who are cared for in residential settings, are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve. But elder abuse, unfortunately, does happen.

At least 4% of Ontario's seniors suffer from elder abuse. It is for them a terrible reality. This is why it's so important that we have programs and resources to help people who are victims of elder abuse, or those who want to help others they suspect are victims. It is why public education is an important tool in addressing elder abuse and helping to prevent it.

Abuse can take many forms: financial, emotional, physical, or simply neglect. It can happen to anyone, anywhere, regardless of cultural or socio-economic background. The health and safety of all Ontario's seniors, and ensuring they have safe, livable communities in which to live, are priorities for this government.

Elder abuse of any kind should not be tolerated in Ontario or anywhere else in Canada. Its prevention is everyone's business. The better informed citizens are, the greater the role they can play in ensuring their own safety and the safety of others.

The work taking place to combat elder abuse across the province is very much a collaborative effort. The progress made to date is the result of the hard work and dedication of many individuals and organizations that are making a difference on a day-to-day basis in our communities. We are very pleased that communities have come together throughout the province to combat elder abuse.

The results are both promising and impressive. Innovative local developments are contributing to real, positive change in our fight against elder abuse and improving the quality of life for all seniors in the process.

For the past year, eight regional elder abuse consultants have been working diligently across the province in supporting new and exciting local elder abuse networks. They have been working with senior groups and local service providers to promote and support community efforts to combat elder abuse, helping communities coordinate local justice, health and community services to respond to the needs of abused seniors. They are contributing to elder abuse training for front-line staff from sectors such as health care, justice and financial services.

Local elder abuse networks have been established or rejuvenated in 30 communities across the province, bringing the provincial total to 75. By coordinating local justice, health and community services, networks are addressing gaps in services and bringing new players to

the table all the time. These networks are doing innovative work in their communities through mechanisms such as community response teams, and public awareness campaigns have been developed in communities from Dryden to Peterborough to Windsor.

The McGuinty government plans to bolster these local efforts with a province-wide public education campaign. Linkages are being established with other groups that provide training to front-line staff from sectors such as health care and financial services. For example, the elder abuse curriculum is being added to the Ontario Police College training and other professional training programs. Seven networking days have taken place across the province since the launch of the Ontario strategy to combat elder abuse. These days provide an opportunity for seniors and front-line agencies to share best practices and strengthen partnerships. The conference included topics such as reaching out to diverse communities, a multisectoral approach to police education, rural approaches, a northwestern development model, preventing elder abuse of older women, and training of professionals, to name but a few.

All these efforts are generating knowledge and interest that will ultimately help us in our fight against elder abuse. We are ensuring that Ontarians are more aware of how to identify elder abuse, how to address it and how to prevent it. Through the collective efforts of thousands of seniors and service providers across the province, we are sending the signal loud and clear that elder abuse will simply not be tolerated in Ontario. Progress is being made in Ontario's fight against elder abuse; it's being made, but we are not yet finished.

The establishment of an elder abuse prevention day such as proposed by the member from Willowdale today would help advance the fight against elder abuse, and I am therefore pleased to heartily support the honourable member's resolution.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to participate in the debate and I want to commend the member for Willowdale for bringing this important bill forward. I do believe that it may have had more effect had we named it something else. I would have liked to see us name this resolution "respect for elders" because I believe we're dealing with a symptom of something that is pervasive in our society.

I listened with interest to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who spoke about the initiative of the government to incorporate into the police college a curriculum relating to elder abuse. Where we really need to incorporate this issue is in the curriculum of our schools. We need to reinsert into our education system the concept of respect for elders in our communities.

The day was, I recall well, when I was taught as a young person that when you meet someone on the sidewalk, you say hello to them; when you see an elderly person coming along the sidewalk, you're the one who moves and allows that person to have the right of way. There was no such thing as tolerance within our household when I was growing up, and to this day, and there

was no such thing as tolerance within our school, I recall well, of disrespect for elders.

I would suggest that we have a responsibility within our society to send out a clarion call to our educators, to parents, to those in positions of responsibility within our communities that it must start with holding those in our community who have gone before us—our seniors, our parents, grandparents. I see the pages here and I say to them, as you listen to this debate, think carefully about the kind of respect and how much we owe to our parents, to our grandparents, to those who have given us all that we have an opportunity to enjoy in this province. That's the fundamental issue, and I think often we have forgotten, even in this place, the whole issue of respect among members. We have young people in the galleries today and they will be watching the proceedings in the House. The concept of respect between human beings, between individuals as we relate to another is a huge signal that's sent out to youth in our communities and to the province as a whole. If we can't begin to respect each other within our own homes, if we can't respect each other within a place of government where laws are made—we can do all the lawmaking we want to say it's wrong to abuse elders. Let's stop abusing each other and start to show the kind of respect we should be showing each other, starting here. I think it's a great place to start.

Having said that, I commend the member because it is a reality in our communities. I want to support the member in his initiative. It's the appropriate thing to do. All of us, as we focus in on this, know that we will have our hand in improving the quality of life for elders in our communities.

1030

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): First of all, I want to thank the pages. The pages probably play the most important role in this Legislature. They found my tie, my suit and my glasses. So I want to thank Mark and Michael. I ran up here at the last minute from one meeting to another. Without the pages I don't know how we would function around here. I congratulate them. I believe it's their last day today and I want to thank them on the record for the work they've done. I know we'll be doing that a bit more formally later. I'm not sure if it's the last day today. Is it or isn't it?

Interjection: One more week.

Mr Bisson: One more week. I almost sent you guys away early. You would have been mad at the NDP. Future voters would never have gone there. You get another week.

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): They should be.

Mr Bisson: Come on, Jim. You're so cynical.

Back to the point: I want to say that I, along with the rest of my colleagues and the New Democratic caucus, support the member for Willowdale on his motion. We agree there is a problem of elder abuse within our society. It's not specific to Ontario. We need to recognize that this is a problem that's existed for a long time. Governments in various jurisdictions, including Ontario, have

made some progress over the years, from government to government, as we learn more about these issues. As we become more aware of them, more and more is being done. I think what the member is recommending is that we try to step up our initiatives and efforts to make sure we prevent those awful situations from happening.

I want to put a couple of things on the record. A Conservative member made a couple of points that are important. I forget who it was, but it was one of the Conservatives, who got up as the first speaker; I meant to write down what riding and I don't remember. Elder abuse comes in different forms. There is the physical, which we know about. It's pretty clear understanding what that is. There's a psychological or threatening kind of thing as far as people making you feel unsure is concerned. I think there's also government policy to a certain extent, which is a subtle type of abuse.

I don't want to go as far as my colleague in the Conservative caucus in saying it's direct abuse, but I think it's very subtle. We need to make sure that the services we provide to seniors in our province are of a degree that people are able to live in some comfort of mind, knowing they don't have to worry about how they're going to be treated today or tomorrow when it comes to their physical needs, as far as having a roof over their head, food, services, all that stuff is concerned, but also their psychological needs in regard to how we deal with them.

Many of you know as members of the assembly, and if new ones haven't learned this they're going to learn it very quickly, that one of the most disrupting things for a senior is change, especially when it comes to somebody in an institution. If you have somebody living in a long-term-care institution somewhere and all of a sudden they're told that they're moving, even to a room across the hall, that can create a lot of disruption in that person's life because they've finally become acclimatized and settled into a particular issue.

Abuse comes in various forms. I don't think this is abuse that people want to give, but I think government policy sometimes has the effect of abusing seniors to a certain degree. That's why I want to put on the record that I was a little bit concerned the other day with the comments the Minister of Health made in regard to changing the policy here in Ontario when it comes to forcing seniors to take their placement once a placement has been offered in a long-term-care facility.

There is one side of my brain that says I understand what the minister is saying. In our terms, we have the problem of bed blockers. But let's keep in mind we're dealing with seniors here. Let's not look at them as units of production or units of whatever. These are people. They're elderly people. About 40% to 50% of them have some form of dementia by the time they end up in our institutions. Let's say you have an Alzheimer's patient who is becoming more and more critical. All of a sudden they're admitted to the hospital for some physical issue, but they are also suffering from dementia. It's at the point that the community care services are no longer able to provide the level of care necessary to leave that senior in

their home, independently or with a family member. They go into what we call ALCs—alternate level of care beds.

One of the big problems we have in this province right now is that the alternate level of care is mushrooming. In the Timmins and District Hospital, for example, it's a huge problem, and it's a huge problem, I would say, in most hospitals. There are so many ALC beds being taken up by seniors who are waiting to get into long-term-care institutions that it's preventing patients being admitted into other parts of the hospital when it comes to medical or surgical needs, and that's a problem.

What the government was musing about the other day, specifically the Ministry of Health, was that we may take the position that we would force a senior, once a bed becomes open within the system, to take that bed and then later transfer them back to wherever their first institution of choice was. I just want to put in practical terms what that means to a frail, elderly patient, and that's why I'm saying it's abuse to a certain extent. If you have somebody at the Timmins and District Hospital who lives in the city of Timmins and they're starting to suffer dementia and they have physical needs and they can no longer live independently, all of a sudden the government says, "Oh, by the way, there's a bed available in Matheson," or "There's a bed available in Kapuskasing." They're perfectly good institutions, I'm not going to argue that they're bad ones; they're very good. But the problem is, there's the whole link of the family and support groups that they need in order to feel comfortable and they're being sent out into a community in which they have no family support. That is going to put that elderly person in a cycle of worry and they're really going to start fretting and that's not good for their health, not to say what it means to the family.

Now all of a sudden—you've acclimatized the patient to the ALC bed—the elderly person, if the minister gets his way with this policy, is forced into an institution far away. Then the person gets acclimatized and you shift them back to the institution they wanted in the first place. I'm not going to vote for that. I think that's nuts. We've had to deal with this problem for many years. Our policy took the position that elderly people should have the right of refusal. They should pick their first institution of choice and other institutions they're interested in. If they're offered an institution that they're not happy with, they shouldn't have to take it. After all, this is their housing. I would say, if the government goes that way, it is, quite frankly, abuse of seniors, and I think we need to keep that in mind.

The other thing is this whole issue of the promise the government made in the last election vis-à-vis \$6,000 per year additional funds necessary for patients in long-term-care institutions. We saw the stories the other day where you can get more and better food living in a prison in Ontario, in some cases, than you can get in a long-term-care institution. There are a lot of good public institutions out there that provide long-term care and actually have pretty good dietary services. I know, for example, at the

Golden Manor in Timmins and others they do a pretty good job. I've never had a lot of complaints about those specific ones, but some of the private ones, I've got to say, are a problem. The government promised they were going to give \$6,000 more per patient, for a total of \$420 million in the first year. When my leader, Howard Hampton, got up yesterday and asked the minister, "Will you commit to the \$420 million you promised?" he vacillated all over the place, more or less telling us that he's going to break that election promise.

So I say there are all kinds of issues that we need to be looking at if we really want to prevent elder abuse. There are a whole bunch of issues that we've got to be looking at far beyond just a motion saying, "Come, we'll hug you; we love you. We think elders shouldn't be abused." We all agree with the motherhood-and-apple-pie statement that's made in this motion but we need to have some concrete policy issues decided by this government when it comes to a level of care for patients and when it comes to others.

Will anybody want more time, or am I going to—

Interjection: Take it.

Mr Bisson: OK. I just saw two of my members walk in and I thought they all want time.

I also want to say that my leader, Howard Hampton, has put forward a bill called An Act to protect persons in care from abuse, Bill 47. This has many good, positive steps to try to prevent elder abuse. We as New Democrats are going to be supporting Mr Zimmer's motion because we agree with the direction he's going in.

I'm asking that the government support my leader Howard Hampton's Bill 47, which deals concretely with the issues of elder abuse to make sure there are some standards that are applied, and that when abuse happens people are forced to report it, so that either staff or whoever might be a witness of abuse reports it and the Minister of Health has some ability to deal with it, which he already has, but we need to give him some additional rights under the legislation.

We will support the legislation. We look forward to the day we have a debate on Bill 47, Howard Hampton's bill on elder abuse. At that time I will be asking the Liberals to vote with us and not do what the Tories always did, which was to vote against good legislation that would help people.

1040

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I appreciate deeply the opportunity, first of all, to express my complete and total trust and support for the member from Willowdale, who has brought forward for us a culture change. I want to make sure we understand clearly what we're talking about here. We're talking about culture change. What you need to do in a cultural change is educate and make sure people move from one way of operating to the next. What I want to do is give you the quick example of what happened with drinking and driving.

The perfect example of that is drinking and driving before MADD, Mothers Against Drunk Driving. What they did was they changed a culture of acceptance. We

know that in courts across the province, across the country and across North America, when 12 people were sitting as jurors to convict somebody of drinking and driving, a serious offence, they usually got off. Why? Because the 12 people sat there saying, "That was me Saturday night, so I'm not going to convict them"—until Mothers Against Drunk Driving stepped forward and said, "Enough of this. We're going to change a culture and an attitude about drinking and driving." Sure enough, that's been happening. We've changed a culture.

What Mr Zimmer is asking us to do today, and I know all of us believe this, is to change a culture of acceptance. We can and must no longer accept the type of abuse that's been going on, not just in retirement homes, not just in long-term-care facilities, but indeed, unfortunately, in people's own homes, and unfortunately, even more so, by their own family members. We've got to change a culture of acceptance. What do you do? You need to bring it forward. You need to make sure it's in the open. You need to make sure, loud and clear, that it will not be accepted.

The minister has told us that our government has said yes. I know the previous government said, "We will not allow that to happen." I want to compliment the member from the third party. Howard Hampton's bill talking about elder abuse is another important step to bring to us the rules and regulations that need to be changed.

I want to take the opportunity to explain to you that in my hometown, unfortunately—I will say fortunately—we had that W-Five episode where we exposed abuse going on in a long-term-care facility; unfortunately, obviously, because we caught some people doing some things to our senior citizens that are not acceptable. The member from Oak Ridges was absolutely correct, and I support him 100%, when he says there needs to be a cultural change in our attitudes toward our senior citizens. Why do I say fortunately? Because it brought it out in the open and some good things are happening.

I'm proud to report to you today that a report I wrote about the incident went to Monique Smith, the member from Nipissing, who is parliamentary assistant to Mr Smitherman, the Minister of Health, who has made it clear that he wants action on this, not just the words that some members, unfortunately, are saying, that this is just a huggy-feely thing. It can't happen until the culture changes. That's what this motion is going to do. It's going to assist us in changing a culture.

The report goes as such:

"Report of Meeting Held on Tuesday, February 10, 2004, 7 pm at Versa Care in Brantford, Re: Seniors' Issues:

"I wish to report on a meeting I attended by invitation regarding recent events concerning 'elder abuse' initiated by the local coverage of the W-Five program and the show itself. I will include previously reviewed materials, the report on the meeting itself and follow-up for your consideration.

"The meeting was held at Versa Care Centre, a facility owned and operated by Central Care Corp."

"Versa Care facilitated the meeting with several head office" people in attendance. The local staff was there along with the manager. The police services board was there by invitation, regional ministry representatives were there by invitation and there was myself. "These were the only invited guests.... The media were not invited."

The company has agreed to "refocused training; relationship with Mohawk College," a local college, "to assist with their expertise; increase their inspections, 'town-hall' meeting with residents" on a regular basis; "hired a social worker to be 'resident advocate'; include unannounced visitations by company officials." They are going to review their staff routines, and assurances that the ministry and officials would assist any accommodation changes required.

I have indicated my disgust and my hurt that any senior would be abused and have committed to doing whatever I can to assist in bringing this under control. Hence my support for Mr Zimmer's motion.

I provided information to the ministry on actions to date and future plans, which are approximately 300 unannounced visits to the facilities, 600 more visits to come; the parliamentary assistant to write a report, recommendations and findings for the minister for action.

I have indicated the vast majority of the workers and employees of long-term-care facilities and retirement homes are caring, compassionate, loving and professionals. We can't paint everybody with one brush. Several ideas were generated, and those include: video surveillance, registry of abuse files, regulated class of all providers for PSW, province-wide advocates, and the list is endless. We must start to change the culture, and I support this motion 100%.

Mr Tascona: I'm pleased to join in the debate with respect to the private member's resolution.

As the member from Oak Ridges stated, this is a matter of respect, and as the member from Brantford states quite correctly, it's a matter of changing the culture. But certainly we have to have respect for our elders and the seniors, what they need today. There are issues out there, and I think the member from Timmins-James Bay pointed out one of them with respect to the health minister's role, with respect to the treatment of seniors, especially when they're facing a situation where they have had to leave their home, be it an apartment or a house, and they have to make a decision to go into a nursing home.

I've been very proud of our government's role when we have been in power with respect to seniors in nursing homes. In my riding of Barrie-Simcoë-Bradford, under the new provincial standards with respect to nursing homes, we had tremendous advancement. We had a number of new nursing homes built that allowed seniors in my riding to stay in their community, as opposed to being shipped to other communities because we didn't have those nursing homes.

I was pleased when the Minister of Health was there to open Victoria Village, which is in Barrie, a state-of-the-art facility. One thing that we asked the—and it's still on

the table because we're doing fundraising for it—is to have a day facility for seniors so that their children or people who are caring for the seniors can drop them off during the day to have them looked after. That's something that the ministry has been looking at. I urge the ministry to take a serious look at that, because I think it's important.

We have two facilities that allow for seniors to be looked after in the day in my riding, and it's important that that is a policy of the government with respect to not only providing nursing homes, but also to allow people who are not in nursing homes to be treated and looked after with respect during the day at the facilities that Victoria Village has proposed and has built and is looking for ministry funding in terms of looking after, during the day, those seniors who are not in nursing home facilities.

This is the Barrie Examiner we have today, which talks about, "The practice of letting hospital patients wait for a bed at a long-term-care facility of their choice may soon be coming to an end."

I quote Donna Rubin, the chief executive officer of the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors, who said, "Forcing residents to relocate is more than a mere inconvenience.

"This flies in the face of resident choice, and we don't agree with it.

"The average long-term-care patient in Ontario is more than 85 years old; all are frail and more than half of them suffer from some form of dementia.

"Every time you transfer somebody, you run the risk of deteriorating their health." Rubin also noted that family members often provide an elderly patient's only means of emotional and moral support.

It goes without saying that we have got to be careful with respect to what policies we're going to implement, especially if the Minister of Health is being directed by bean-counters, because that's essentially what it looks like here. Respect has to be not only lip service. I know the member from Willowdale. His intentions are honourable, but he's asking the government of Ontario to commit to a day. The bottom line here is to commit to a policy that shows respect, and if your policies don't show respect for seniors, especially when we're talking about seniors who are 85 years of age or more being moved out of facilities, that's not respect. That's in fact abuse of their residence choice and their rights as seniors. I urge the minister to stop that particular policy. It's not going to work.

1050

I would say a lot of seniors are feeling threatened today. I got this the other day from the government about electricity prices changing, information about how it's going to change, but there's nothing in that pamphlet that would say to seniors, "Here's what we're going to do to help you because we know you're vulnerable." I urge the Ministry of Energy to look at that in terms of how they are going to treat seniors with respect regarding hydro, because they're going to be impacted.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I'm pleased to rise and add a few words of support for the member from Willowdale's resolution. I want to commend him—he gets it; he understands. He's made the most important leap that we, in this House, can make. That's the one-foot distance between the heart and the head. So thank you, member from Willowdale. He understands that we need to talk about this issue if we're going to move forward on it, and he has used his good office to provide us with an opportunity to articulate our concern and to, in fact, express our resolve.

I could speak about a number of things, about the stats, the fastest-growing demographic being seniors, about the programs and resources the previous government and this government continue to dedicate to this issue, about the recent conference where over 500 professionals came together to explore ways to tackle this issue, about our elder abuse strategy, its desire to coordinate services, train front-line staff, raise public awareness, regional consultants, the stakeholder networking days. I mean, it goes on and on. There are a lot of good steps that are being taken to help define, raise awareness and respond to the issue of elder abuse.

I want to spend the three minutes or so that I have to share a couple of stories, to put a human face on this, if I can, because I think many of our seniors are living between memory and hope. There's often a combination of what I call the "F" factors: family, fear and fraud, in many cases, that seem to conspire almost to mitigate against our seniors.

A woman named Mary—not her real name—an 81-year-old woman with the exception of having a problem with short-term memory loss, lives well, comfortably and independently in a small cottage, loves to garden, very worried about her plants. In the fall came a knock on the door from a company that offered to take care of her bushes, prune her roses, get her garden ready. For \$500 he'd do that. She was delighted. She paid him the \$500 and, to his credit, he did the work, but two weeks later came another knock on the door, "You still haven't paid me that \$500 you owe me." She paid him again. This happened six times before one of the family members finally twigged in, and when Mary was asked, "How come you didn't blow the whistle?" she said, "I was afraid my son would put me in a long-term-care facility." So a little bit of support can change that.

An 83-year-old man I met—wife with Alzheimer's—at an advances-in-dementia research conference came up to me and said, "You know, Mr McMeekin, I'm not afraid of dying." How do you respond to someone whose opening remark is, "I'm not afraid of dying"? I said, "How long have you felt this way?" We talked and I said, "What do you fear?" He said, "What I really fear is getting one of those catastrophic, debilitating illnesses that makes me a burden on my family and I've got to be put away." So I said, "Well, that's pretty dark. What's your hope?" He said, "My hope is that I get sick late and die fast." You know, the fear out there that people have.

Abuse takes many forms. The member from Willowdale outlined some of those. Clearly, prevention is the

business of all of us here. Taking initiatives to combat elder abuse is a responsibility we share. It could be physical, emotional or psychological. It could be fraud, like the gardening example that I spoke about. It can also be institutional, and I want to end with this. We would never think of having somebody lose their job because they are male or female, because of their race, because of their religion, because of their sexual orientation. Yet in Ontario and Canada today, we have a form of institutionalized elder abuse called mandatory retirement. Think about it: People with gifts who are in the workforce, who make a contribution every day, are being forced to stand down. I believe the commissioner of human rights in the province and I believe Paul Martin and our Premier need to end this practice. That is one of the most important things we can do to eradicate elder abuse in our province.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Willowdale has two minutes to reply.

Mr Zimmer: I want to thank my fellow members for their support of this resolution. As I said in my opening remarks that awareness is always the first step. We as legislators must take the lead. We must start by being aware in this Legislature, in our constituencies, in our personal lives, in our communities. Our just-in-time lives often leave seniors behind—unheard of, unthought of, alone in their fear and their anxiety.

This resolution establishing an annual Elder Abuse Prevention Day is a first step in bringing elder abuse in all its forms—the subtle forms, the obvious forms, the physical, emotional and financial forms—to the forefront. We owe it to our seniors, we owe it to our society, and we owe it to our collective self-respect.

The good news is that awareness programs have a tremendous track record in bringing issues to the fore that need addressing. I talked earlier about the track record in terms of spousal abuse, the health issues of cancer, of Alzheimer's disease, of child abuse. So I want to thank members for your support in taking this first step in changing our societal attitudes toward elder abuse.

RECALL ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004

SUR LA RÉVOCATION DES DÉPUTÉS

Mr Barrett moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 39, An Act to amend the Election Act respecting the recall of Members of the Assembly / *Projet de loi 39, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale en ce qui concerne la révocation des députés de l'Assemblée.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, the member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I stand today to argue in support of a concept whose time I feel has come in Ontario. It's the concept—the power, if you will—of recall as found in this private member's bill, the Recall Act, 2004.

One may ask why I am interested in recall. Well, 10 years ago, I first saw the need for recall power for people. I was chatting with a fellow from Markham, the home to former MP Jag Bhaduria. After allegations of writing threatening letters and lying about his background, Bhaduria was the subject of petitions that garnered tens of thousands of signatures for a recall. The result: While he was removed from the Liberal Party, Mr Bhaduria remained as the MP for Markham-Whitchurch-Stouffville until the next election, as there was no government provision to recall that particular MP.

People were frustrated. They felt powerless in the face of government rules that only allow them a voice once every four years or so. I felt it wasn't right at the time for the people in Markham-Whitchurch-Stouffville, and it isn't right for people today. The very concept of democracy, in my mind, speaks to the need for people to have decision-making power on who represents them more than once every 2,000 days or so.

1100

I will be clear: Recall is not a novel concept in North America or in Canada or in the province of Ontario. Over the last century there have been numerous examples of governments taking the bold step to hold themselves accountable to people—again, not only on election day but every day. In this House alone, over the last decade there have been recall provisions brought forward by members of both the Conservative and Liberal parties. In 1993, Liberal MPP Carman McClelland introduced a private member's bill entitled the Recall Election Request Act, supported by a number of present cabinet ministers—Monte Kwinter and Gerry Phillips, to name a couple. Less than a year later, a PC MPP, Don Cousens, introduced a recall process resolution. Again, despite support for recall crossing party lines, these initiatives never became law.

In other jurisdictions, recall has had a long and storied history. Fifteen states in the United States employ recall for elected state officials. Half of these jurisdictions adopted recall before the First World War in response to the party machine corruption and scandals of that era. I note that most states allow recall of elected local officials.

I will mention the California recall legislation. That was introduced in 1911. While proponents favoured the amendment as another mechanism to fight graft and corruption in government, opponents criticized it as a device that extremists and malcontents could employ to harass and remove honest officials. History has proven their fears unfounded, however, as, despite numerous attempts to utilize recall, the bar for a recall election was set at a suitable level, and it was not until 92 years later that Governor Gray Davis became the first statewide official to face a recall election. In the Governor's case, the recall process was set in motion when 80,000 petitioners, which was greater than 12% of the vote count in the previous election, signed petitions to recall the Governor on grounds of both financial and electricity mismanagement.

Back on this side of the border, in 1935, William Aberhart's Alberta brought in recall legislation that was itself recalled within a year when, to his horror, Premier Aberhart discovered it was being used against him. Presently, British Columbia is the only province in Canada to allow its people the power of recall over elected officials. BC's NDP government adopted recall legislation in 1994, and since that time none of the 20 recall campaigns has been successful.

You're probably asking yourselves in the House: what is recall? As I've been suggesting over the past few minutes, recall is a procedure for voters to hold their elected representatives to account before the end of their elected term. In the case of this private member's bill, the Recall Act, any elected member may be recalled for conduct unbecoming a member after a year in office. In addition, a Premier would be subject to a province-wide recall process in which all qualified voters in the province would be allowed to participate.

To initiate the process, any voter in a member's riding can apply to the Integrity Commissioner to approve the issuing of a recall petition. As I suggested earlier, to ensure that recall powers are not abused, the bar to qualify for recall must be set at an adequate height to discourage any irresponsible applications. The first such bar is set at the Office of the Integrity Commissioner. If the Integrity Commissioner decides an application is frivolous or not made in good faith, it's immediately denied. Otherwise, the commissioner would conduct a hearing within two months to determine whether, on the balance of probabilities, the member has engaged in conduct unbecoming a member. If the commissioner determines that there are valid reasons, the commissioner will issue a ruling in writing and approve the issuing of a recall petition. Once the petitions have been issued, they must be returned within a year to qualify for a possible recall referendum.

A writ will be issued for a recall referendum if, and only if, the number of qualified signatures on the petition is more than 25% of the total votes passed in the preceding election in the electoral district to which the petition relates. This minimum requirement sets a higher bar for recall referendums than in California, for example, where it's 12% of votes cast.

Once the writ has been issued, the chief electoral officer must call a referendum for a date at least 28 days and not more than 56 days later. On the day of the referendum, if more than 50% of the votes cast are in favour of the recall, the member ceases to hold office, his or her seat becomes vacant and we have a replacement election, obviously.

So, there you have it, members: application, hearing, petitions, referendum and, finally, recall. These are the five hurdles that would have to be overcome for a member to be recalled from the Ontario Legislature.

I believe this empowering legislation gives government one more chance to live up to the campaign commitment to strengthen democracy through democratic renewal. The Recall Act lives up, in my view, to

the true meaning of democracy by giving governing power to the people, the power to retain or to remove elected representatives at times other than election days. By ensuring that electors have power today and every day, rather than only when government deigns to call an election, recall enhances the dialogue between electors and representatives that's so key to our democratic process. This is a principle that, I feel, speaks to the democratic renewal commitment that the current government was elected on.

I look forward to support, obviously, as we continue the debate this morning on what I consider empowering legislation. Through recall, voters would never again feel powerless when faced with an elected representative who engages in conduct unbecoming a member—for instance, breaking promises, being implicated in scandals or other unbecoming conduct.

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): Well then, all of you should have been recalled last time.

Mr Barrett: Again, I'm not thinking of you, Mr Gerretsen; I'm thinking back to Jag Bhaduria. If recall was in place, the anger of the electorate would no longer swell, frustrated and helpless, for the four years of a distant autocracy that we can see in a majority government. Majority government members can proceed unchecked—we know this—with little accountability to the people who put them there in the first place.

Today I'm looking for support for a concept. I feel the time has come for Ontario to have recall. Obviously, no one here has anything to be afraid of or to hide. I just ask the assembly here to think beyond your present term, perhaps as legislators in California did back in 1911. Hopefully this process will never be required in the province of Ontario.

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): As a rookie MPP, I took a look at this particular act with great interest. At first, I thought that the issues of accountability and how to deal with a member of Parliament who had acted in a way that was unbecoming of a member was very important. But then I got thinking about the whole process, and the more I got into it, the more concerns I had about this particular bill.

The issue of accountability in terms of conduct, I thought, as a rookie, belonged to the Integrity Commissioner and was dealt with under the Members' Integrity Act. I think the recall bill overlaps with that to a great extent. If it's an issue of conduct of the member, then I think that the jurisdiction for that belongs to the Integrity Commissioner. If it's an issue of whether the voter feels that the policies that the member is advocating and supporting are offensive, then it becomes a political action rather than an issue of the individual's conduct. At that point, I started to look at the issue around, is there potential for abuse of this process? I really begin to worry about that, because I think that voters can target individuals if they are afraid or concerned about the policies they've brought forward. As a matter of fact, my concern is, it could become as extreme as a voter who is

unsatisfied with the election result coming forward the next day and asking for a petition for a recall just because they don't like the result of the vote.

1110

I read further into the package that the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant put together, and I noticed the bill says this can only be done once per government. What happens if there's a situation that's even more grievous and we've already had one recall? How do we deal with that? Do we simply go back to what we have now, which is that we bring it to the Integrity Commissioner and the Integrity Commissioner deals with it? What is the point of doing it if that's the issue?

In a lot of ways in terms of accountability, we've already had situations in the past where things such as public pressure and the media have dealt with issues of accountability. I can think of one particular incident where I had a view on the news of a member riding his horse in Oklahoma. The whole issue of his absence from the House was brought up, and I think public pressure was brought to bear and the member resigned. So there are already ways we have in terms of accountability. As I said, there is the issue of overlap.

Another part of the information I received from the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant talks about success and what constitutes success of a recall, and it says 50% of the votes cast. My experience, in most cases, is that people who are not unhappy, who have no concerns, tend to stay home. How are you going to be sure, when it says 50% of those who cast votes, that the vote is truly reflective of how a member's riding really feels about the action? I think it should actually be something like 50% of eligible or registered voters. As I said earlier, I find that most people will stay home if they're very happy with a situation. They feel there's just a small group who are protesting and they don't want to be involved in that.

At this time, I want to let the Speaker know that I'm going to be sharing my time with the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh and the member from St Catharines.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? I'm looking to—I just wanted to make sure you wanted to be in the rotation—the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm certainly pleased to join the debate with respect to the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant's piece of legislation, which we're dealing with here, called the Recall Act, 2004. The recall of an elected member has been subject to a lot of discussion in the last few years. We know there's a procedure in British Columbia with respect to dealing with this, essentially arising from the elections they had in 1999, I think, or thereabouts, and probably the most celebrated case was the one in California with respect to the recall of Governor Gray Davis.

This is an issue that obviously deals with accountability. Certainly in an election we're dealing with situations where, because we have first past the post, the individual who is elected may be elected on 30% of the

vote or on 50% of the vote—who knows? It just depends on how that particular riding works out. As members, we're all subject to the Members' Integrity Act, in terms of the conduct that we are held to and the powers that have been given to the integrity officer in that regard. The Election Act sets out standards for members with respect to the type of conduct and who can become a member and who can't. Obviously, so the public knows, there are preconditions for people to be able to run under the Election Act; and there are also the Members' Integrity Act and the Election Act in terms of conduct of members, what is expected of them and what's not permitted.

I think the member here is looking to bring further accountability into the system. I'm not against accountability for the system. A recall act, such as it is, is something that merits consideration by this House because it is private members' business and we always give very serious consideration to private members' bills or resolutions that are put before the House.

I guess my concerns with respect to what's being proposed here have to do with procedure as well as form. The procedure is in terms of not creating a process that will subject the member, who is trying to do his or her job, to challenges at any time with respect to complaints that are put forth to the Integrity Commissioner. That process is out there at any time. A member can put to the Integrity Commissioner a complaint against another member with respect to conduct. That is already there. I guess the question is that when you have a riding as large as mine and you have a procedure that would allow anyone to get into that, the member would spend more time with respect to dealing with situations that may be partisan-driven as opposed to any substance. If a member has done something wrong, there is a criminal procedure, if it falls within that bailiwick. There is also the provincial procedure and there is also the Members' Integrity Act.

I think what the member is trying to do here is to put a precondition with respect to conduct. In fact, if it is wrongdoing, then you would have a context of saying that this conduct was wrong, through the Integrity Commissioner, and then go forth to the petition. What we're looking at here is that the petition would be 25%, and then, if there's a vote, it's more than 50% of who votes. You look at the fairness of it, saying that if an individual is elected by 50% or more of the people, then 25% of the people can have that particular member subject to recall. I think that's something that has to be looked at very seriously because there's a lot of money put into the election of a member by the taxpayer. There is a lot of effort put into the system in terms of the election, by the member and the people who support the member in terms of their election.

I would think that if we were going to consider this further and give it more serious consideration, what we're dealing with here is not something that can be taken over by partisanship. It has to be dealt with on substance, in terms of not adding on to the layers of account-

ability that already exist for a member with respect to breach of trust of their position, which is already watchdogged by the criminal procedure, and also situations that are governed in terms of conduct of the member under the Members' Integrity Act.

I look forward to the debate on this. Certainly it merits consideration. I think the member's intentions are in good faith. I think there is going to have to be a serious look at it from a procedural point of view to bring some fairness and balance not only to the members' rights but also to the election process, to not make it a farce, because once a member is elected and given the responsibilities, they shouldn't have to face another election that is partisan in terms of dealing with their right to serve their constituency.

1120

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I would like to let the Speaker know that I'm sharing my time with the members from Scarborough Southwest and St Catharines.

It's a pleasure to rise today to speak on this bill, having read in the *Simcoe Reformer* on March 17 that it was going to be brought forward. It is a bill that is intended to hold elected representatives accountable. Well, I was elected on October 2, and when I put my hand on my late grandmother's Bible on my swearing-in day, that was the day I said to my constituents that I would be accountable here at Queen's Park. That's exactly what I intend to do.

In speaking against Bill 39, I would like to make strong references to the Office of the Integrity Commissioner. We all went through a process with the Integrity Commissioner before swearing on that Bible, and I went through the investigation knowing that I had to live up to certain standards, that there were certain opportunities that I had and that I had to live up to those opportunities in a parliamentary and proper fashion. In this province, we hold our parliamentarians accountable between elections by means of parliamentary responsibility. For example, we as members have responsibilities to the Office of the Integrity Commissioner. We have responsibilities to the electorate by our conduct and words in question period, in the debates on bills and in our effectiveness as members of the government or opposition. Here at Queen's Park and in our work on behalf of our constituents, we have daily opportunities to be accountable. If not, then it's our responsibility to get out of the kitchen and resign.

With the Office of the Integrity Commissioner and its close observations of our actions in the House and on behalf of our constituents and Ontarians, I believe our conduct is always closely checked and under scrutiny. I would like to ask, what do the Tories have against the Office of the Integrity Commissioner? Day after day during the past couple of weeks, we have seen that they do not accept the rulings on our Minister of Finance, the capable and honourable Greg Sorbara. We've heard them hammered day after day. With Bill 39, once again they do not accept that his rulings will result in resignations.

They really must have a problem with the Office of the Integrity Commissioner. We on the government side don't.

Mr Speaker, this proposed bill would require the Integrity Commissioner to rule that recall is justified. As you know, such a ruling would normally result in resignations anyway. We saw that in past governments with MPP Chris Stockwell and MPP John Snobelen. The wrath of Ontarians came down and we saw what happened.

This Legislature has the power to remove members who choose not to resign. It happened back in 1884 to Adam Crooks, when a motion of the committee on privilege and elections declared his seat vacant. It was carried. A writ was dropped and a by-election held.

Establishing recall in any political context allows it to be a highly politicized process. I look at BC, where they have gone through 20 recall campaigns, a process costing over half a million dollars, and nothing has been done; no recall has been successful. Look at California. Has it made things better? I don't think so.

I do want to say, in speaking of the bill itself, there are sections—especially the details of the application for recall, the structure and composition of the recall application, and the protocol and procedures—that need some work. We do need parliamentary reform, but I really don't think it's through the recall process. We have to put our minds together. We have to understand that recall will be just another jumble in the electoral mix, a jumble which, quite frankly, we do not need. We do not need to Americanize our political process.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I'm pleased to rise and speak in support of Bill 39, not necessarily in its entirety or the total package, recognizing that when you debate the package, it goes for hearings and some amendments before we get to the final third reading, because I do have some problems with some of the intricacies of how the recall legislation would be implemented, but I strongly support the need for this type of legislation. I think we've heard a considerable amount of debate about the Integrity Commissioner. We just heard the member across the aisle speaking about not needing anything more than the Integrity Commissioner, but there are a lot of things that can happen here in this place that are not necessarily against the Members' Integrity Act but need to be able to be addressed by the people who voted for me or who supported me to be here.

I think of one, and I don't think anyone in this Legislature needs to worry about this legislation, because I don't think anyone would do it, but it appears that I can get elected on October 2, take one trip to Toronto, be sworn in as a member of this Legislature and then not come back again until the next election and get paid for four years doing another job. There is no one, no system in place that prevents that from happening. I think the people of Oxford have the right, if I chose to take that route, or need a system in place to make sure that they could have a representative to look after their needs. That's one of the things that needs to be addressed.

I just want to read quickly here—and it's from a news release that the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, who introduced this bill, referred to: "I do believe that in any democratic society the electorate should have the right to hold elected officials accountable between elections."

I think that's so important, but what becomes even more important in this bill, and where the Integrity Commissioner has no authority, is to hold governments accountable through the Premier. This bill, of course, addresses the recall of a Premier, and I think it becomes so important that it's not against the Members' Integrity Act, but when we go to the people in an election, we actually put forward a proposal: "If you vote for this party platform or this government, these are the things that we will do." I think it becomes important that people don't have to wait four years. In this case they knew in less than six weeks after the election that they were not going to live up to the promise, but there's absolutely nothing that can be done for four years.

Yesterday we had a great debate here in the House about the treatment for autistic children, and in fact a letter was read out in this Legislature that pointed out that the Premier had said that this was discriminatory, and that immediately upon being elected, the Premier would change that, that they would provide these services for autistic children. It has become quite clear that's not what happened, but there's nothing that the people can do about that.

The people in my riding were very concerned about what would happen to the price of hydro if changes were made. We remember the previous government capped the price of hydro at 4.3 cents. It was quite clear during the election campaign, when the now Premier said, "Elect a Liberal government and the price cap of 4.3 cents will stay in place at least until 2006." That's what my people believed. Now, all of a sudden, they say, "No, that was before the election. After the election, we're going to have to put it up to make it viable. We're going to have to put it up at least to 5.5, and we're not going to guarantee to leave it there. We may have to raise it even more than that."

I think we need a system to allow people to say, "No, that's not what you told us, and you have to stand up for what you said, and we should be given the opportunity to make a judgment call." The recall doesn't say that it would automatically happen. He may be able to, in the process, justify what was done, and the people would say, "No, we're not going to have a recall," but I think we need a system in place that would allow that to happen.

I do have some concern, and that's why I say I hope that when the bill goes to committee, there are some changes made, and some reference has been made to Gray Davis's recall in California.

1130

I have a problem with the fact that we first have a recall vote, and 49% of the people who voted said they didn't want to recall and 51% said they did want a recall.

So they have a recall, and then the person who replaced the then governor was elected with 26% of the vote. Now that says to me that some 74% of the people didn't want the new governor, when only 49% didn't want the present government. So in my opinion, that system doesn't work very well.

But then, as the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant mentioned, that was put in place in 1911, and electricity prices were not a problem in California in 1911. So maybe the rules weren't written quite the way they were needed today.

I strongly support this piece of legislation. I hope that everyone in the Legislature this morning will support it to go on to committee to have it corrected or some changes made to make it a solid piece of legislation to provide the type of accountability that the people of Ontario are entitled to.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I rise to speak on the private member's bill put forward by the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. I must tell you that I cannot support this bill. I do not believe that anyone in my party can support this bill.

This is nothing more than an importation of US politics into Canada. They have a vastly different system. I will tell you, even there their system does not work, for many of the reasons enunciated by the previous speaker here. They don't work. Maybe they're old, but they simply do not work. All we see is the fascination of people watching on television, watching the Terminator duke it out with Gary Coleman. That's what we watched for weeks and weeks. Then, after the recall was successful, only 26% actually bothered to go out and vote. It just doesn't work.

This has been adopted in British Columbia, as has been said by other speakers; and 10 or 15 years ago, people were looking for mechanisms to try to control politicians. But if anything proves that this is not a bill that's going to work, it's the BC example, where it has been tried 20 times and 20 times has failed; 20 times with people running around trying to get signatures; 20 times with millions of dollars being spent; 20 times with expectations being dashed and all to no avail. To adopt it here, I would suggest, is just going to doom it. Ontario will just follow a failed policy.

Even the Reform Party, which once championed this, which once had it front and centre in their list of suggestions that they wanted to do, has now seen—I think it's the Reform Party with a few Conservatives in it now. But the Reform Party of today, the new Conservative Party, appears to have dropped this from its agenda.

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): Hostile takeover.

Mr Prue: Yes, it was a hostile takeover.

This bill, in my view, has at least eight serious deficiencies, maybe more, but time permits me only to deal with the most egregious ones.

The first is that it will, by its very nature, increase partisan bitterness in this House. People will attempt to use the Integrity Commissioner for partisan purposes,

trying to remove a member or members whom they do not like.

Number 2 is that it involves a three-step process. The three-step process is one more than takes place in British Columbia, with all its faults and its failures. That step is to involve the Integrity Commissioner first. It will take an additional 60 to 90 days, or whatever the period is, for the Integrity Commissioner to research it. It's a three-step process, which makes it even more impossible to remove someone.

Number 3 is that the position of the Integrity Commissioner himself or herself should be above politics. What you are doing with this bill is drawing the Integrity Commissioner right into the heart of this Legislature, right into the heart of the political process, where the Integrity Commissioner is having to rule on largely political facts and factors, which he or she ought not to do. The Integrity Commissioner should and must remain above all of this.

Number 4: The bill has no definition of the conduct unbecoming a member. There is no definition in the bill. So what is conduct unbecoming a member? Is it to stand up in the House and make a silly speech? Is it to refuse to apologize if you have been unfair to a member? Is it to swear in the House? What is "conduct unbecoming a member"? I tried to find out where this is. Where is the definition of "conduct unbecoming a member"?

I will tell you, and I may have missed it, that we went through a couple of acts trying to look for it. Is it in the Members' Integrity Act? No, there's no definition there. Is it in the Elections Act? There's no definition in there of "conduct unbecoming a member." Is it in the Legislative Assembly Act? Again, there is nothing there.

So what is "conduct unbecoming a member"? There is nothing in the bill. We are being asked to support a bill where a member can be recalled and there is absolutely no definition of what that conduct might entail, leaving it solely up to the discretion of the Integrity Commissioner.

Number 5: This will require that there be a valid voters' list. If you're going to have to get 25% of the voters, you're going to have to determine where those voters come from. Are you going to use the old list, which might be two or three years old? We all know what happens now every election year: You're trying to use old voters' lists and people are running in at the last time trying to vote. How do you determine who those 25% are? If they've recently moved into the riding, they may not even have been there at the last vote. Are they entitled to vote? We don't know. Where is the voters' list? What are you going to use?

Number 6: We have a multiparty system in this province and throughout Canada. We saw in the last election how the parties had portions of the vote. No party got 50%. Many members in this House did not get 50% of the vote to be elected. That's the system. We know the rules. You could, in this Legislature, be elected with 30% or 32% or 33% of the vote; you could be here.

You could have it that the majority of your residents didn't vote for you, and then that same majority could

come back and say, "I didn't vote for him, so I'm going to sign this, because I want him gone because I really wanted someone else," and for no reason other than that, on the most frivolous of grounds. If it's good enough to elect a member on a plurality vote, as we have today, then you cannot un-elect a member with the same thing. If you can get 30% of the vote and be elected to this Legislature, you can't say that 50% is enough to kick you out. It makes no sense at all.

Number 7: There's nothing in the bill that talks about the spending limits. It is said they will be left to the regulations. However, in the Elections Act, which brings all the members here in the first place, it is embodied right in the act. We know what the election expenditures are. This is a lacuna here. This is a failure of the bill, to put in how much money can actually be spent to recall a member. If we have rules on how much you can spend to get here, you should have the same rules embodied in the act, on how you get somebody out. Because it's not there, this too is open to far too much discretion.

Last, but not least, number 8: I find it rather bizarre that to recall a Premier, who is, after all, the same as all of us in this House—I understand that the Premier has other responsibilities and gets paid more and has more power and prestige. I understand all that. But the Premier is, by definition, a member of this House and is elected in his or her constituency, the same as all of us. This would mean that person would have an inordinate amount of—trying to recall that person, his or her constituents would be put at a complete disadvantage. If it's good enough to recall a member, then it should be good enough to recall the member who sits in the Premier's chair.

Quite frankly, we cannot support this bill for all of those reasons and many more. I wish I had more time to talk about the others. The real solution here, and I hope Mr Bryant will consider this as he travels the province looking at parliamentary reform, is that there are two things that need to be done.

First of all, the parties need to be able to properly discipline members who do not behave in a manner becoming the position they hold. If a member fails, as the previous speaker was saying, to show up for days and weeks on end, then that member should be called by the House leader or by the leader of the party and the law should be laid down.

If they continue not to show up, they should be removed from the caucus. If the member has transgressed, the member should be removed from the caucus. I think back to the last House. There was a member from the Liberal Party who sat in that corner throughout the entire House because she had been removed, almost from the beginning, from the caucus and sat alone as an independent. That was the decision of the Liberal Party. Take it as you want as to whether it was right or wrong, it was done.

Last but not least, we need a change in the law for proportional representation, because that, and that alone, will make sure the people's voices are adequately heard

at election time, where a vote really means a vote and where you get a say on which party is elected.

1140

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I'll be sharing my time with the member for St Catharines.

Following up on the remarks by the member for Beaches-East York, I agree with a great deal of what he had to say. What we're seeing here today, the phenomenon, is something that is really born out of California, born out of western Canada and born out of the Reform Party. The once proud federal PC Party of Canada has been taken over, almost like a hostile takeover, by the western element. They're the ones who are trying to implement this recall system. They're trying to do the same thing throughout Canada, and I think it has filtered down now to that party and to this private member's bill today.

I cannot support this bill. Instead of looking at the California or BC model, I would rather look at the British parliamentary system, which has existed for roughly 1,000 years and which I do not believe contains a recall process. That is a system that has worked. There are systems in place such as caucus discipline, and other mechanisms that allow members to be disciplined if they're not behaving.

What's really at issue here is the whole aspect of being a politician and making a decision. Oftentimes we're asked to make a decision that's not popular. Some of our decisions are very difficult to make. If we make a difficult decision, and if this piece of legislation were to pass, those that are opposed to it would prepare a petition, present it here and have the member removed for making a difficult decision.

I remember my time as a city councillor when I had to make difficult decisions. I remember when we decided to take children from children's aid out of institutions and put them into group homes. When that happened, the people in the communities were upset. It perhaps was not the most popular thing to do, but it was the right thing to do. If a recall mechanism had existed back then, I wouldn't be in office today because the residents would have got a petition together, had a recall and tried to remove me from office.

Last election, in my riding, there were roughly 24,000 votes cast. Under the mechanism here, all that is required is 25% of the total votes cast to form a petition. This means that roughly 5,000 signatures by someone out there in my riding who perhaps doesn't like me for whatever reason—putting together 5,000 names, presenting it, and then the whole recall mechanism is created. That's wrong and that's something I think we have to defeat here today. I wasn't elected on October 2 to do everything that's popular. If that were the case, I'd make sure that everyone had two cars in their garage, food in their fridge, paid no money for their electricity and so on. We can't do that. There is an issue here about electoral responsibility and doing the right thing.

Throughout history, people, politicians, have made difficult decisions that weren't necessarily the most popular decision but were the right decision. All one has to look at is the example of Abraham Lincoln during the civil war. He was very unpopular and after four years people were asking the then president to try to sign some kind of peace treaty with the south, some kind of agreement with the south. He refused to do that because he knew that was not the right thing to do. What if the people would have recalled him back then? Think of the implications there.

Most recently, the concept here in Canada of whether or not to send troops to Iraq: The federal government decided not to do that. Perhaps it was not a popular decision. There were lots of people who wanted to do that. Yet if we had done that, if the Prime Minister at the time had decided to do the popular thing and sent troops to Iraq, there would be a lot of dead Canadians today, just like there are dead Spaniards and dead Americans and so many others who have died in that battle. A decision was made that wasn't perhaps the most popular decision but was the right decision to make.

So this is a very dangerous piece of legislation. I think the referendum is held at election time. It was held on October 2. I think there is a little bit of anger perhaps on the opposition benches with the results of that election and this is the sort of response that we see: legislation that would have us go out perhaps next spring and have another election. It's costly, it's not worth doing and I think it's the wrong thing. This thing has to be defeated today and I hope members will follow that and defeat this today.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to be here this afternoon to support my colleague—

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): It's morning.

Mr Dunlop: This morning, OK. I get up at 5 o'clock every day, guys, so I put in a day's work before most of you guys get up.

Interjections.

Mr Dunlop: It's a fact. I never see anybody around here until about 10 o'clock. So what's going on with you? Come on, get to work. You're paid to be down here and do some work.

The fact of the matter is—

Interjections.

Mr Dunlop: Mr Speaker, you can disturb these people so easily, I'm telling you.

I want to say this morning how I'm here to support my colleague Toby Barrett, the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, on this particular piece of legislation. What's important about it is that it falls in line with the fact that the Premier, Mr McGuinty, has actually formed a ministry in the Attorney General's office for democratic renewal. I'm hoping that the whole process of democratic renewal will be a long-term process. I hope we'll look at all types of options and give the people in the province of Ontario all kinds of opportunities to discuss the proposals in any democratic renewal legis-

lation you bring forward. I think this is an excellent opportunity to bring forth something like the recall legislation. It may or may not be part of the final analysis or the final changes the minister would want to bring in for democratic renewal, but it's an opportunity and it's an option.

What is very important for Mr Barrett and for our caucus is that we like to have—at least myself; I'm not saying the whole caucus supports it. The same probably with you folks: Maybe not everyone would support it. But the fact of the matter is, it's an interesting piece of legislation. It gives another opportunity for citizens to see democracy at work. I think that's what the minister of democratic renewal would like to see. That's why I'm actually supporting this.

A private member's bill is just that. We all get up and we have an opportunity to vote. It should be a free vote. I hope it's a free vote today because it's a democratic renewal issue. I hope you people are all going to voice your concerns and vote with your minds, not with Dalton McGuinty's office.

Mr David Oraziotti (Sault Ste Marie): Why didn't you do it?

Mr Dunlop: I'm simply saying to you, if you believe in democratic renewal, you won't vote en masse against this bill at private members' business. That's very simple.

I have a couple of minutes left and I do want to share them with my colleague from Oak Ridges. I appreciate the opportunity this morning to be here and I thank the member for bringing this very interesting piece of legislation forward, which I will be supporting.

Hon Mr Bradley: I have an opportunity to speak on this because I have some very strong feelings, and it's not because it's emanating from the opposition or from any particular political party. I think this idea of recall is bizarre. It was brought to its extreme in California where we saw an actor who was brought out of the movies and immediately in as the governor of California through a recall process which was in itself, I recognize, not the same as the member is proposing, but which made a laughingstock of the state of California when we saw this happening.

1150

This is an idea which is American. This is not our British parliamentary tradition. I can remember when the Conservative Party stood for the British parliamentary tradition which I believe in, and that is, where there is accountability in this House through responsible government because we are a combined executive and legislative body.

What this opens us up to is a rich group of people wanting to get rid of an unpopular member of the Legislature who may have taken an unpopular stand on an issue. This really leaves it open to very wealthy interests who, for instance, may have an interest in a development that takes place that a member is blocking. They then have an opportunity to put together a plan, together with spending a lot of money, to get rid of that member. I say

that the electorate should make that decision at election time. I can think of some instances, but I won't share them with you at this time.

I realize it's more popular in western Canada, particularly in the province of Alberta, where a lot of ideas seem to be permeating into the east now. I remember I watched the Conservative Party convention when they were choosing their national leader. Who was the keynote speaker? Ralph Klein. That is the picture of the Conservative Party of Canada now—Ralph Klein. Those who think that his ideas apply to the east, I'll tell you, should look very, very carefully at that. I believe in the British parliamentary system. I think this is open to abuse, such great abuse. I believe we have an opportunity at election time. Just because the Conservative Party promised to close no hospitals, then closed a whole raft of hospitals, didn't mean that I was calling for the recall. I was, instead, calling for, at election time, a decision to be made, and that decision was made.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I wanted to rise in support of my colleague's bill. I want to make it clear: This is a vote today in principle. Should, in fact, there be a mechanism for the electorate to recall a member of the Legislature? In principle, I believe that there should be. There are clearly some issues with the bill, in terms of its details and so on, that I also have some concerns with. Those are things that can be worked out in committee, but it's the principle that we're discussing.

To the member from St Catharines, I can't tell you the number of people who are coming to me and saying, "How can we recall Dalton McGuinty? What is it that we can do to recall this government that has made so many promises that they're not keeping?" That's really at the heart of this, and I think the reason that the Liberal Party is saying "no" to this and will say "no"—I predict that every member of the Liberal Party will vote against this. Why? Because they know, if this bill ever became law, the whole bunch of you would be recalled. Yes, we would in fact have an election. I just say to you, I think this exercise that we'll go through in this vote today will be so revealing about the angst that the Liberal caucus has, the insecurity they have about their jobs as legislators—I predict the Liberals will vote against this bill to the person.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant has two minutes to reply.

Mr Barrett: I really appreciate the ideas and the information that have been kicked around this morning. We've received input from a total of 10 ridings and, personally, I welcome that kind of feedback.

The member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex kicked off a concern. The 50% of the votes cast: This does apply to eligible voters. You have to be old enough to vote. You have to be a Canadian citizen to vote on this referendum. I just wanted to clarify that. You have to be a resident, an elector, in that riding to vote on this.

The member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford raised the question of 25% of electors being names on the petition have to be qualified voters. Their signature has to be vetted by the person taking the petition around. This is

not any kind of anonymous Rick Mercer farcical Internet name process. They have to be witnessed. Their signatures have to be vetted and matched with the eligible voters' list. So there are checks and balances there.

To the member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, to counter your view, this bill is not against the Integrity Commissioner. The Integrity Commissioner plays a very comprehensive role. The Integrity Commissioner is the first hurdle. He decides whether this would be frivolous or vexatious. The member for Oxford pointed out that an MPP, once elected, can show up once and take off for the rest of their term, just to use that example. Maybe for that reason alone there is merit in continuing discussion on this debate.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for private members' public business has expired.

ELDER ABUSE PREVENTION DAY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier Essex): We will first deal with ballot item 9, motion 10, by Mr Zimmer.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

RECALL ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004

SUR LA RÉVOCATION DES DÉPUTÉS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier Essex): We will now deal with ballot item 10, that being second reading of Bill 39, An Act to amend the Election Act respecting the recall of Members of the Assembly, standing in the name of Mr Barrett.

Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it. The bill is defeated.

Private members' public business now having been concluded, this House is adjourned until 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1158 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ABORIGINAL HEALTH CARE

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm pleased that the government has taken notice of the success of the aboriginal healing and wellness strategy program and is carrying on this innovative policy that has continually improved the health and well-being of aboriginal communities across this province.

I believe this unique partnership between our province and 15 aboriginal organizations and First Nations is a success because it allows aboriginal people to have direct input into services and programs, and provides the arena

and tools so that aboriginal people can design, deliver and manage their priorities while respecting traditional aboriginal values and practices.

I'm a proud supporter of this initiative and look forward to continuing to work with First Nations people, groups and organizations across this province in building on this achievement.

INTERNATIONAL WALK TO SCHOOL AWARD

Mr Vic Dhillon (Brampton West-Mississauga): I would like to congratulate Morton Way Public School in Brampton for having been chosen as the first runner-up for the first-ever International Walk to School Award.

For the past three years, Morton Way has celebrated Walking Wednesdays, which encourages students to walk to and from school one day a week. Amazingly, between 88% and 98% of the students at the school participate in the program each week, trading in their daily bus ride for some exercise, some fresh air and some time spent with neighbours, parents and friends.

This program has participants in 29 countries around the world, and this prestigious distinction is extremely well deserved for those at Morton Way Public School who make this event happen every week. This program truly is wonderful and is a shining example for schools around the world.

I would like to thank these organizers for doing their part in developing healthy habits in children and for helping them stay active and fit. I thank them also for their contribution to the environment by promoting environmental awareness among students, and for diminishing pollution and gridlock in the surrounding neighbourhoods. This program shows both children and parents the importance of their physical and environmental health and shows them how we can all do our part to reduce pollution in our communities.

All of us in Brampton West-Mississauga are proud of the efforts of Morton Way Public School and I'm happy to be able to recognize those efforts here today.

UNIVERSITY FUNDING

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): The announcement today by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities of \$48 million in funding for colleges and universities to compensate for the first year of tuition totally undermines the stability and quality of our universities and colleges. It is a political announcement that is woefully inadequate.

In consultation with those at the university and college level, I have learned that the \$41 million for universities does not fully compensate them, because they needed \$70 million for the first year of the tuition freeze. In fact, it badly hurts the students and their quality of education since it is one-time funding only and there is absolutely no guarantee it will be rolled into the base next year.

This announcement means the universities cannot count on more money for future years. It means they can-

not hire badly needed additional or replacement faculty, nor can they do ongoing long-term planning for future years. There is also no money here for the research fund we put in place. It does not provide any guarantee that the quality assurance fund we set up last year to provide \$75 million, and to increase to \$130 million and then \$200 million, will be continued. This was set up to address the decrease in funding by all three parties over three decades.

There is no new money here for student aid. In fact, this announcement actually reduces the accessibility to university and college education.

CHILD SAFETY

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I just had the opportunity to walk across from the Whitney Block. The sun is shining and it's a wonderful spring day.

I want to take this opportunity as we look forward to an extended weekend to offer a small note of caution. While we are enjoying the warming rays of the sun and the longer daylight hours, some of our children may find themselves at some risk of harm. The creeks and rivers are running full and faster, and in some instances they are overflowing their banks. Ice is fast receding from our lakes. The risk of accidents and injuries to children playing around the waterways is particularly high at this time of year. While we enjoy the time away from our workplaces and the pleasure of family time, we need to be extra vigilant to ensure it is a safe time as well.

Ontario is blessed with beauty in both its urban and rural settings, and we should avail ourselves of the opportunity to enjoy it. Included in my riding are the wonderful attributes of the Rouge River, Duffins Creek, and the Lake Ontario waterfront. I hope my constituents visit these wonderful places as well as others, but do so with the potential risk in mind and do so safely. I encourage all Ontarians to act similarly over the days and weeks ahead.

NORTHEAST MENTAL HEALTH CENTRE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): The Northeast Mental Health Centre is in crisis. In order to balance its books, the centre must cut \$2.3 million from its budget. This will have serious consequences for children and adults in northeastern Ontario who suffer from mental illness.

The first round of cuts impacts children. They include the end of the district day treatment program, which provides mental health services to secondary students; the end of mental health services for children in CAS foster homes; the end of mental health services for children under six living in Sudbury district east, in Espanola and on Manitoulin Island; a reduction of services to children who are dually diagnosed with mental illness and developmental disabilities; and a reduction in the

preschool speech and language program so that the waiting list for service will grow from eight months to one year.

These cuts will have a devastating impact on children, but they're not alone. The board will make more decisions about cuts on April 16, and these cuts will involve adult and community-based programs. They will have serious consequences too.

On February 23, I wrote to both the Minister of Health and the Minister of Children and Youth Services about this issue. I asked both to intervene immediately so there would be no loss of service or staff. In response to a question I raised last week, the Minister of Health said the government is working on it, but difficult cuts are underway and more will be made.

The centre needs to know now what the government is going to do to protect patients and mental health services. I call on the government today to announce additional funds for the Northeast Mental Health Centre.

ANTI-SMOKING CAMPAIGN

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): Later today I will be presenting a petition from the students of St Peter Catholic High School in my riding of Ottawa-Orléans. These exceptional students are taking part in an advocacy campaign for a smoke-free Ontario. The project was spearheaded by the exposé team, which includes Samantha Armour, Monica Rondeau, Bailey Vieau, Kate Heney, Cassandra Steffensen, Andrew Showers, Adam Warner, Tristan Phillipe, Dylan Stogran, Rosa Zito and Kevin Richardson.

These young activists organized the distribution of 1,800 blue ribbons to all of the students in the school who support the campaign to "Examine the Facts, Express your Thoughts, Expose the Truth About Tobacco." St Peter is the only school among the 40 participating from the Ottawa area that has chosen to turn to the Ontario Legislature to advance their message and petition members to pass legislation to protect Ontarians from tobacco smoke in all public and work places. I commend their efforts and the example they represent of youth who are working hard to affect public policy for the benefit all citizens in this province. With their invaluable perspectives and contribution to the debate, we may be able to learn how best to encourage those who might be tempted to smoke to never do so.

These students from St Peter have shown that health promotion activities, whether through quitting smoking, better diet or more exercise, can be effectively promoted by dedicated young people in our schools. I commend public health nurses like Beverly MacSween for being their catalyst.

SAFE DRINKING WATER LEGISLATION

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I rise in the House today to remind the government about a

negative impact that safe drinking water regulations are having in rural and northern Ontario.

The upgrades to facilities and the testing requirements that are now mandatory under regulation 170 are coming at far too high a cost and do not allow the time necessary for municipalities to adhere. There is a genuine threat that these regulations will force community halls, arenas, churches and restaurants across this province to close their doors or disconnect their plumbing. It is no secret that these facilities offer a great deal to the rural and northern way of life.

I was pleased on Monday, March 29, when Liberal MPP Jim Brownell asked Minister Dombrowsky a question on this topic. However, I was shocked by the lack of an answer that the minister provided him in return. This was a scripted question with a scripted answer. I don't believe Mr Brownell could have gone back to his municipal leaders with a clear conscience to tell them that the minister was committed to finding a solution to this problem. Quite frankly, she didn't even answer his question.

I have written two letters to Minister Dombrowsky regarding this topic and I have yet to receive a response. In the letters I made a suggestion and I will restate my position here today: I believe that the working group that had been set up before the election, between AMO, municipal leaders and the Ministry of the Environment, should be re-established with added participation from the Ministry of Health.

This is the only way to find a solution to this problem. I think we sometimes forget around here that bureaucratic inflexibility and iron fist enforcement are not the only way to solve problems.

1340

EASTER GREETINGS

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I rise today on behalf of the House to bring Easter greetings, not only to my constituents in the riding of Scarborough Southwest but also to the people of Ontario.

Easter is a time for families to come together and spend time with each other. In a place as rich in diversity as Ontario, this holiday is celebrated in many different ways. Whether it is the traditional Greek mageritsa, the Ethiopian dabo or the Brazilian paçoca, or just plain old Ontario ham, many mark the end of Lent and the arrival of spring with food, drink and celebration.

While at Easter we celebrate the death and resurrection of Christ, it is also a time to celebrate the end of winter and the coming of spring. Around Queen's Park and in gardens across Ontario, the first flowers have begun poking through the ground and robins have returned to build their nests and raise their young. After a long winter, it's nice to see the days getting longer, the evenings warmer and the grass greener.

On behalf of the government of Ontario, I would like to extend my warmest wishes to all members of this

House, their families and all the families across Ontario who will be coming together to celebrate Easter.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): Yesterday I asked the Attorney General, Michael Bryant, what the Liberal government's position is regarding the prosecution of criminal charges under the notorious federal Liberals' long gun registry, Bill C-68.

As members will recall, former Attorney General David Young had announced that the Ontario Conservative government would join with six other provinces and the territories in refusing to prosecute our citizens under this billion dollar Liberal boondoggle law that criminalizes law-abiding Canadians.

The Attorney General, who is increasingly being recognized as a poseur, fancying himself as Ontario's answer to Jack Nicholson in his "You can't handle the truth" charade last week, provided an answer that was disingenuous at best. He said, "We will continue to prosecute offences to the full extent of the law in the same way the previous government used that law to do so." That response was far from accurate, given that not one charge was prosecuted under this odious law by the former government.

I ask the Attorney General to clear the air on this important issue and state whether the Liberal government will prosecute Ontarians under the wasteful and offensive long gun registry law. Stop the affected behaviour, take off the pancake makeup and give Ontarians a straight answer.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT

(INSULIN PUMPS FOR DIABETICS), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ (POMPES À INSULINE POUR DIABÉTIQUES)

Mr Gravelle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act /
Projet de loi 55, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): My bill would amend the Health Insurance Act by making the provision of insulin pumps an insured service under the act. In my riding of Thunder Bay-Superior North alone, approximately 700 people would benefit from such an amendment to the act.

As you know, Speaker, an insulin pump not only prevents complications for young people but in many cases reverses them by putting a regular amount of insulin into the body that closely matches what the body normally does. Unfortunately, the cost of the pump prevents most Ontarians from having the use of it.

Diabetes is a leading cause of blindness, kidney failure and heart disease in Ontario. Type 1, or juvenile, diabetes is a life-altering condition. While people with diabetes make up only 6% of Ontario's population, they account for 32% of heart attacks, 43% of heart failure cases, 30% of strokes, 51% of new dialysis patients and 70% of amputations.

I look forward to debating this bill on April 22.

The Speaker: Introduction of bills? Motions? Statements by the ministry?

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent of the House to allow the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to give an announcement to this House on the phony tuition announcement she made outside the House this morning.

The Speaker: The member is seeking unanimous consent.

I heard a no.

Mr Arnott: Mr Speaker, I sat in this House for eight years while the member for Windsor-St Clair would repeatedly and systematically complain about our government occasionally making announcements outside the House. How can he have the unmitigated gall—

The Speaker: If you'd got unanimous consent, you could proceed. There's no unanimous consent.

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Before you call question period, I draw your attention to the fact that we had a memo issued by the Office of the Premier indicating that the Premier would attend question period today. We'd like to have clarification; we're advised now that he will not be, on the day it has been announced that Ontario lost 25,000 jobs in the last month.

The Speaker: I was not intending to call question period yet, but if there was a letter saying the Premier would be here—I don't know if the House leader might want to make a quick comment.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): The opposition was advised, as is the course, that the Premier is unable to attend today.

DEFERRED VOTES

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): We have a deferred vote on the motion by Ms Mossop for an address in reply to the speech from the throne.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1348 to 1353.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bountrogianni, Marie
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Chambers, Mary Anne V.
Cordiano, Joseph
Craitor, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Dhillon, Vic
Di Cocco, Caroline

Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat
Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldip
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Marsales, Judy
Matthews, Deborah
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil

Meilleur, Madeleine
Mossop, Jennifer F.
Oraziotti, David
Patten, Richard
Peterson, Tim
Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Racco, Mario G.
Ramsay, David
Ruprecht, Tony
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wong, Tony C.
Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Churley, Marilyn
Dunlop, Garfield
Eves, Ernie
Hampton, Howard

Hardeman, Ernie
Jackson, Cameron
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario
Murdoch, Bill
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Prue, Michael
Runciman, Robert W.
Sterling, Norman W.
Tascona, Joseph N.
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 50; the nays are 22.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It is therefore resolved that a humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

"To the Honourable James K. Bartleman:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has addressed to us."

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just want to bring to the attention of the House that it's the 41st birthday of our colleague from Waterloo-Wellington, Ted Arnott.

THERESA BOYLE

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'm not 41.

On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I understand it's the final day here for one of our respected members of the press gallery—she's going on another assignment—Theresa Boyle, from the Toronto Star. I know we all wish her the best of luck.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Since we're acknowledging people, today is also the birthday of the member for

Nickel Belt. I'm not allowed to disclose which birthday it is.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): It's quite an Easter spirit.

ORAL QUESTIONS**ONTARIO ECONOMY**

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is for the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, while your Minister of Finance has been busy defending himself from an ethical scandal, while your Premier has been running around the country and the province talking about the dire Ontario financial situation, 25,000 people have lost their jobs. At that time, in March, the only person who should have lost his job was the Minister of Finance for his lack of judgment on that scandal.

Could the Acting Premier stand in his place and now admit that their \$4-billion tax increase is sending a bad message to the investment community and he should change course before it costs Ontario even more jobs?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I'll refer that question to the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): Let me tell the member opposite that, in fact, since this government took office, we have seen an increase in the number of net new jobs created to 51,300. Let me also add, for your information, that GDP grew by 1.2% in the fourth quarter of 2003, for annualized growth of 4.8% forecasted for this year. So the Ontario economy is chugging along and creating new jobs. One month does not a trend make.

1400

Mr Baird: This is the first verdict on the biggest tax increase in Ontario history. Bob Rae taught us that when you raise taxes it kills jobs, and Mike Harris and Ernie Eves taught us that when you cut taxes it creates jobs.

Let's look at the record: The biggest tax increase in Ontario history; they've raised taxes on small businesses, working families and seniors; they've raised hydro rates; they've raised the minimum wage; they've not implemented their promise to protect commercial auto insurance; and they've done nothing but bad-mouth our economy.

Would the minister stand in his place and admit that this tax increase is disastrous for the Ontario economy and it's time to change course before there is any more damage and before any more people lose their jobs?

Hon Mr Cordiano: The only bad mouth for this economy is the mouth this member opens every time he says something.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Cordiano: It is.

If you look at the record of job creation, in March 2004, SAS Canada opened a new 110,000-square-foot

facility; Research In Motion added 220 new positions; Freightliner added an additional 300 jobs; DataWave, 200 new jobs; CAMI recalled 100 additional employees; TelusSpectrum, 250 employees for North Bay.

Job creation is happening in the province, and the economy is going in the right direction. Things are happening. In fact, I would remind the member that when you look at our tax rates, we still have, as a result of whatever was done with the minister's announcement back in the fall, a lower tax rate than the US Great Lakes states average: 36.12% compared to 40% in the United States.

Mr Baird: The cumulative tax burden on Ontario businesses is higher than our trading partners and it's gotten worse because of the actions of this government. They've broken their promise on property taxes, they've broken their promise to small business, they've broken their promise on commercial auto insurance. They've broken every single economic promise they've made.

Dalton McGuinty looked at taxpayers in the eye in \$4-million worth of television commercials and said, "I won't raise your taxes." Now he's brought in a \$4-billion tax increase. Would you not stand in your place and admit it's having a disastrous effect on the Ontario economy, and will you not change course before even more people lose their jobs?

Hon Mr Cordiano: The only disaster that was about to happen was if that party got re-elected as a government. That was the only disaster.

If you look at KPMG's report, which was tabled just last month, Ontario still has a significant cost advantage over the United States in terms of the cost of doing business. They point out that we have a 7% to 10% cost advantage over Detroit right here in Ontario with respect to the auto sector. As well, I would like to point out that Toronto has an approximate 10% cost advantage over Raleigh and Atlanta when it comes to investing in biotech. We have all the right ingredients for additional investment. I would add that that government failed to represent us. Our presence was zero around the world. You failed to represent us internationally. We're going to change all that.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question, the member for Nepean-Carleton.

Mr Baird: I'll return to the same minister. That is cold comfort to the unemployed tech workers in Ottawa-Carleton who have lost their jobs, finished their severance packages and are off EI. To have a minister of the crown stand in his place and say, "Don't worry, be happy, everything is fine," when 25,000 people in Ontario lose their jobs is an absolute disgrace.

Ontario used to be the economic engine of Canada, a magnet for jobs, investment and opportunity. Now we're becoming a mismanaged, overtaxed debtor, and it's because of you and your government.

Will you not admit that you've got to change course before more damage is done to the Ontario economy? Would you do that, Minister?

Hon Mr Cordiano: I fail to understand how this member can't understand simple numbers. Ontario's corporate tax rate is 36.12%; Illinois, 39.7%; Indiana, 40.5%; let's take New York, 39.9%—combined federal and provincial taxes. We're still lower than the US. We're going to remain a competitive jurisdiction for investment, and we're going to attract additional investment.

Mr Baird: I say to the minister, I hope he does attract new investment because we'd like to see some sort of job creation policy for the government of Ontario.

One of the big things that's driving this is a provincial treasury that is out of control. We've seen massive new spending take place since October. We've seen spending go out of control. Spending is up by more than \$2.5 billion since you took over. Rather than trying to lift us out of a difficult fiscal year, you and your party are digging us in even deeper. Dalton McGuinty's only plan is to spend more and tax more.

Would you not admit that balancing the budget and taking some responsibility which comes with the privilege of being in government is in order? Will you do that, and will you get control of government spending and ensure that we have a balanced budget this year?

Hon Mr Cordiano: Mr Speaker, when that party was in power, the answer to everything was to slash and burn and cut taxes. What did that result in? That resulted in low wages, low-paying jobs; that's what it resulted in. It didn't result in better workers or better jobs.

We are embarked on a strategy to ensure that we have long-term infrastructure and long-term viability in terms of attracting investment. We're going to invest in the areas that are critical for success: skills development, post-secondary institutions. We're going to make sure there's an environment that's conducive to higher wages. That means better workers. We're going to invest in education, something you failed to do, which is serving our province badly as we speak.

Mr Baird: Those comments are cold comfort to the unemployed tech worker in my riding, someone who's lost their job, who needs a government that's going to make job creation and economic growth a priority. Your strategy is such a noted difference from the former government. We saw 1.2 million net new jobs created in eight short years. What do we see from this government? Record out-of-control spending, record out-of-control regulating and record out-of-control taxing.

Minister, there's still time for you to act. Your Minister of Finance will stand here and present a budget in short order. Will you not advise him that it is in the best interests of the Ontario economy that you retreat from your increased tax agenda that's killing jobs in the province of Ontario? Would you do that, Minister?

Hon Mr Cordiano: Talk about reckless; there's a government that left behind a fiscal mess. Talk about not being conducive to additional investment. A fiscal mess, that was your legacy. That does not attract investment, I'll say to the member.

I repeat: Since this government took office, there have been 51,300 net new jobs created in this province. The

economy's on a roll. I say to those workers who have been laid off and lost their jobs, frankly, we're doing a lot more than the previous government. We're working diligently, and you will see that there will be additional investment attracted from around the world, something that party failed to do when they were in government.

1410

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Acting Premier. Before the election, your Premier promised you'd stop Conservative plans for private hospitals in Brampton and Ottawa. Dalton McGuinty said, "We believe in public ownership and public financing of health care. I will take these hospitals and bring them inside the public sector."

Then in November we saw that the Conservative lease became a Liberal mortgage and nothing else changed in the so-called P3 hospital, except that today Ipsos-Reid released a poll which shows that 75% of people across Ontario and across Canada believe hospitals should be built publicly, should be operated publicly, should be financed publicly and should be publicly accountable. Tell us, Minister, why are you breaking the promise that 75% of Ontarians want to you keep?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I'll refer that to the Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to talk about our plan to build two excellent new public hospitals in Brampton and Ottawa. As a result of our engagement on this issue—we have two hospitals which under that party's regime would have meant that land and title transfer of ownership to the private sector occurred—as a result of the work we've done, we have made sure that these hospitals, which are publicly controlled and publicly accountable, will always be in the hands of the public hospital body that has been the contributor to land and is the great contributor of services in these communities.

I think the real test at the end of the day is not a public opinion poll waved around by the honourable member, but rather the proper function of two hospitals in Brampton and Ottawa, hospitals that I am virtually certain will be a source of great pride in those local communities.

Mr Hampton: Minister, you say this is a public hospital. We've actually had an opportunity now to read the document. If it's a public hospital, maybe you could tell us why schedule 17 of the contract lays out a penalty that the private corporation will pay if they misplace a patient, if they injure a patient or if they take the life of a patient. If this is a publicly operated hospital, operated as a public service, why will a private corporation pay a penalty if they lose a patient or if they cause the death of a patient? That doesn't sound like a public hospital to me.

Hon Mr Smitherman: The member will well know, in part as a result of our commitment to accountability,

that lots of documents are available with respect to this. At the end of the day, the hospital that is being built will deliver public services in the way they are delivered across hospitals all around this province. There is, in the provision of services in that hospital, nothing that cannot be done in another hospital in Ontario; in fact, no alignment of services that is not being provided in similar ways in other hospitals around the province. At the end of the day, these are hospitals that will be publicly accountable, publicly controlled and publicly owned, and they will be hospitals that will be great sources of pride in the communities of Brampton and Ottawa.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question, the member from Kenora-Rainy River.

Mr Hampton: With respect, I don't think the minister answered the question. How is it that a private corporation has a penalty clause in their contract that says if they lose a patient or if a patient's death results, they pay a penalty?

There is also another interesting section, schedule 8. The private consortium will be responsible for disposing of biomedical waste and hazardous waste, project house-keeping, replenishing liquid soap, providing linen and laundry, moving patients and deceased within the hospital, moving specimens and samples within the hospital, and moving medical records and X-rays within the hospital. If this is a public hospital, why is a private corporation responsible for all these things? Can you tell us that, Minister?

Hon Mr Smitherman: What I said to the honourable member in my earlier response was that the provision of services in this hospital is consistent with the provision of services in other hospitals all across Ontario. The list of services that the member reads out is consistent with the roles that other private sector entities are playing in Ontario's hospitals today. At the end of the day, the provision of these clinical services in these hospitals in Brampton and Ottawa will function exactly as public hospitals across this province function. The real test here is, will these hospitals provide services that make the people of the communities of Brampton and Ottawa proud? Yes, they absolutely will.

Mr Hampton: I believe I heard the answer that Elizabeth Witmer used to give. That's exactly what the Conservatives used to say. The Conservatives used to say, "All of these services will be provided by a private corporation on a for-profit basis. This is a great deal."

Minister, can you really tell me what is the difference between your private hospital and the Conservatives' private hospitals? Because when you read the agreement, there's no difference at all. Your private hospital is the same as the Conservatives' private hospital, except maybe you've changed one word. What is the difference?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The difference is obvious, in part measured by the fact that the honourable member has access to contractual information because this government committed to making that information publicly available. Further, this member very well knows that in his report on the future of medicare in the country of

Canada, the Romanow report clearly spoke to the reality, which is that in our public health care system, where the amount a person has in the form of their own resources shall not dictate the services they receive, that does not mean there isn't room for the private sector to play a role in the delivery of ancillary services.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. You have about five seconds to wrap up.

Hon Mr Smitherman: If that party was so principled on this point, then one must wonder why during their five long years of government in this province they didn't republicize, why they did not bring back into the public domain that variety of services that in our publicly funded and universally accessible health care system are delivered by the private sector.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. On this side of the House, we've been warning you for months on your irresponsible economic agenda. You're going to destroy Ontario's competitive advantage. This isn't just our message; this is the message of people like Jack Mintz, who is professor of taxation at the Rotman School of Management. He says that Ontario's economy as you stated it today to the member for Nepean-Carleton is uncompetitive. You're just not using all the right numbers. You have failed 26,000 people and their families. You simply don't get it. You continue to break your promise to protect small business, the real job creators. Why do you continue to pour sugar in the very engine of Ontario's economy?

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I'll definitely put my money behind the KPMG study, an independent study done to assess the cost competitiveness of Ontario. I'll put my money behind KPMG any day over what you're saying. Let me quote from what they've said. Very clearly they have demonstrated that Ontario continues to show a 7% to 10% cost advantage over our US competitors. That means we are in a much better position to attract investment than many other jurisdictions, including other parts of the world, not just the United States. I would like to add that when that party was in power they presided over boom years and still left a deficit, after many years when the economy was booming. Shame on you.

Mr O'Toole: I'm just talking with the people of Ontario, my constituents in Durham; you're more about KPMG. The people of Ontario can't eat numbers and KPMG reports. You simply don't care about working families or small businesses. Look at the record here. You've been raising property taxes, income tax, jacking up hydro rates and destroying the very confidence in Ontario's economy. Your track record is clear. Let me reveal your track record: 163 employees at Domtar in Cornwall fired; 900 employees at Ford Windsor fired; 125 employees at Corel Corp fired; 245 employees at the

trailer park, Orangeville, fired; 24 employees at Babcock and Wilcox in Cambridge fired; 150 employees of Alcatel in Ottawa fired; 31—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Question.

Mr O'Toole: You're starting to sound like Donald Trump. You've failed 2,600 people. You fired them. Can you tell me what hope you've left for the people of Ontario?

Hon Mr Cordiano: Let's actually hear what Professor Mintz said when he was at committee. This was his advice to the committee: "Don't cut taxes until the budget is balanced." That's what he said to you when he was at committee. That was his advice. Let's not forget what that previous government did. What did they do to nurses? They fired nurses. What did they do to water inspectors? Fired. What did they do to meat inspectors? And what did they do to you last time? They fired you.

1420

TUITION

Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): My question is for the Minister of Colleges, Training and Universities. I know your tuition freeze is welcome news for Ontario students who have faced spiralling tuition increases. My own two sons will be entering post-secondary education in September and we need to ensure it is a high-quality system. Indeed, our students' success is vital to the future well-being of our province. We need to ensure they're receiving a quality education, whether they are in North Bay, North York or the Davis campus of Sheridan College in Brampton.

Our colleges and universities across the province need to be fairly compensated for the tuition freeze. What level of compensation is being given to our post-secondary institutions for the freeze and how did we determine this level of compensation?

Hon Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I would like to thank the member for Brampton Centre for that great question. I'm very pleased to tell the House today that this is the start of a new era in post-secondary education.

Let me also tell you that there were students out for the announcement this morning, which took place at York University, which also has Seneca College on its campus. There were students there from all over this province. There were students there from Thunder Bay; there were students there from Windsor; there was one fellow who drove all the way from Windsor this morning and is driving back this afternoon.

The compensation that will be provided for universities and colleges was very thoughtfully considered and based on a matter of equity. We looked over the past four to five years, and that has resulted in a 2% compensation on regulated, 6% for the colleges on deregulated and 8% on—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mrs Jeffrey: Minister, our government's compensation package is for the first year of the freeze. Why have we not announced compensation for the second year of the freeze?

Hon Mrs Chambers: We have announced the first year of compensation based on the history that I just referred to. The second year will be considered during the consultations that are taking place over the next several months, which will enable stakeholders such as students, institutions, parents, all the stakeholders in this sector to look at what they want the system to look like on a go-forward basis. Rather than being presumptuous as to what the compensation should be for the second year, we will go through those deliberations in an orderly fashion and announce the results in the fall.

The Speaker: New question. The member for Nepean-Carleton.

Interjections.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I'm going to miss you guys this weekend.

The Speaker: Order. I know the opposition is quite anxious to ask questions.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I want to return to the Acting Premier, someone who is quickly earning the title as the minister of job destruction.

Minister, you have created the perfect storm for job losses in Ontario. Businesses, particularly our valued small businesses, cannot survive the soaring hydro rates under your energy policy, the extraordinary tax increases you've brought in in so many areas, including property taxes, and an increasing regulatory burden since your government came to office. You've essentially introduced a job-killing tax. Many of these small businesses just won't be able to survive this storm.

There are 25,000 people in Ontario who went through a bad experience in March. They've lost their jobs and they're worried about themselves, their futures and their families. I want to ask you specifically, what message of hope do you offer to these 25,000? What are you doing today to make their lives better?

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): This government takes very seriously the fact that some people have lost their jobs, and we're concerned about that. We're working very diligently, very hard, as a government to put in place the right conditions so that we can continue to attract investment, so that we'll have further attraction of investment. We are investing in the things that will make us successful.

Today the Minister of Colleges and Universities announced a freeze for colleges and universities. That's very important. The key to an innovative economy, something you totally ignored, is to make sure that we have the best-trained, most highly educated workforce in the world. We're doing that.

Mr Baird: Beyond platitudes about years to come in the future, you're offering no hope to people who are unemployed, no hope to people who are pounding the pavement looking to work, and that's a real disgrace I say to the minister.

This is déjà vu all over again. This is the way we were warned it would be. The last time the Liberals wreaked havoc on the Ontario economy was 1985 to 1990, when they were big taxers, big spenders and big regulators. I want to say to the member opposite, there is still time to make a difference, to change course and abandon this job-killing tax.

Will you stand in your place and promise the people of Ontario that in the next budget there will be no increase in taxes, that you will not allow any more tax increases to wreak havoc on the Ontario economy and our small businesses? Would you do that, Minister?

Hon Mr Cordiano: I would remind the member that the corporate tax rate in Ontario is 36.12%. That is lower than most of our US competitors. The combined corporate tax rate in the United States for all the Great Lakes—the average corporate tax rate—is 40%. We are 4% lower. As a matter of fact, the combined federal-provincial small business tax is 18%, which is significantly lower than many other jurisdictions. I remind the member as well, as I said earlier, that the economy has created 51,300 jobs. There are a number of new jobs being created all over this province. It is unfortunate and I feel for those people who have lost some jobs. We are doing everything we can to work with those people. My ministry is making an effort when there are layoffs. There is a unit of the ministry that will work with the communities involved and the people who are affected. I remind the member that this government is undertaking to invest in the right areas, which are post-secondary institutions.

1430

ONTARIO DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, as you know, Brantford in my riding of Brant is a city that has faced in the past some economic development obstacles. However, we are moving forward with true vision and looking forward to a rejuvenated downtown. Specifically, the old Eaton Market Square, a integral part of our downtown area, is a vital component to this redevelopment. I know that you have heard from myself and municipal officials in the past about your understanding of our needs. Could you tell me the status of the Ontario downtown revitalization program agreement—the ODRP—between our downtown and our ministry?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): This government takes very seriously the vitality of our downtowns. As a matter of fact, downtowns, particularly in our mid-sized communities, are really the heart and soul

of the community. Presently, there are still 10 outstanding loans under the Ontario downtown revitalization program, a program that was started some 30 years ago. These agreements were basically to help revitalize the downtowns of various communities. Over the years, most of those loans have worked extremely well and the downtowns have been reactivated and rejuvenated.

In some cases, though, perhaps as a result of box stores being opened in suburban areas—or in Brantford's case, the fact that the downtown Eaton's store was lost some time ago—we realized that some of these loans have been in jeopardy. For that reason, we were able to renegotiate the loan with the city of Brantford to make sure the citizens of Brantford will benefit from the revitalization.

Mr Levac: It's extremely good news that that negotiation took place and that we are now going to move forward with the vision of our downtown and our development—good news indeed for Brantford. This project is key to revitalization.

I know there are other areas in the province going through very similar circumstances that need our attention as a government. What role do you see the government of Ontario playing in assisting municipalities across the province, along with us, in bringing business back to the cores of our downtowns?

Hon Mr Gerretsen: We feel this is literally a win-win situation. Not only were we able to renegotiate the loan with the city of Brantford, but we were able to do exactly the same thing with the city of Guelph, and we're willing to look at many of the other communities that are still burdened by these loans as well. We look forward to working with the minister of infrastructure and the Minister of Finance to make sure the downtowns of our communities are as strong as possible.

The kind of loan agreements that have to be worked out will have to benefit not only the taxpayer of Ontario, in making sure the loans are repaid, but we want to make sure that the heart and soul of the communities—namely, the downtowns of these areas—is as strong as possible. That's what this government is all about. That's what we're all about on this side of the House.

SECOND-STAGE HOUSING

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question for the Acting Premier. Welcome back, Acting Premier. Before the election, you promised to restore funding cuts to second-stage shelter programs by the previous government. Your announcement on April 6 led us all to believe that the \$3.5 million would immediately go to existing second-stage housing.

However, it turns out that that is not the case. Instead of funding, abused women are getting smoke and mirrors. Ministry officials have told me that no decision has been made on where the money will go. Eileen Morrow from OAITH was told the same thing. The money will not even go out the door until consultations are conducted within the framework of the upcoming

affordable housing consultations, and there is no guarantee that the existing shelters will get any of that money.

Why are you breaking your promise to reinstate funding to existing second-stage housing programs?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I'll refer that to the minister of children's services.

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Children and Youth Services.

I'd be pleased to answer on behalf of my colleague Minister Papatello. The \$3.5 million is indeed going to second-stage housing. That is what we announced and that is what we will do.

Ms Churley: Your Premier promised to reinstate funding to existing second-stage housing programs. Ministry officials told us very clearly that that has not been decided, that consultations will take place and the minister is looking at a new kind of model.

Housing providers believed that is what the Premier promised on April 6. They cannot wait another day for that money. They have been struggling to continue providing those services since the previous government cut. Now they're in shock because they have been told very clearly that there's no guarantee they are the ones who are getting that money.

I'm asking you again, why are you breaking your promise? Why don't you fully reinstate the services that were cut?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: I'm pleased to answer the question from the member opposite. I was the critic in this area when I was in the opposition. I know very well what was in our platform. What was in our platform was to reinstate funding for second-stage housing. That's what we announced and that's what we will do.

TOBACCO GROWERS

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): To the Acting Premier: During the election, your leader presented Ontario tobacco farmers and tobacco communities with both a threat and a promise. You've kept your threat to jack up tobacco taxes. Governments across Canada now take in over \$8 billion a year in tobacco taxes. You kept your threat; you must now keep your election promise of compensation.

Acting Premier, this Legislature's finance committee supports compensation unanimously; that the tobacco community needs some of that \$8 million back. Farmers have seeded their greenhouses. They're now working up lands. And I regret to report the banks are very nervous right now.

You've kept farmers waiting since October. Farm families cannot handle the stress of your government's constant runaround. What are you waiting for? Are you hoping the growing season will soon be in high gear and tobacco farmers will no longer have any time to lobby this government? Where is the compensation, Acting Premier?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): The province of Ontario and the McGuinty government actively encourage consumers to reduce the use of tobacco products. And the member is right: We're keeping our promise, just as we are on every other matter.

With respect to the specific issue of compensation, we're working with the federal government and industry on the tobacco round table. The process will complement the current federal and provincial initiative in the tobacco-growing regions and support the transition of growers into other viable alternatives. The Ministry of Agriculture will continue to support all farmers' fair share of safety-net programs and the supply management system.

What distinguishes this government from that member's government is that our Minister of Agriculture responds to farmers quickly and positively. This government is keeping its promise, and I'm glad you noted that in the preamble to your question.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Minister, we heard your colleague the Minister of Agriculture and Food and the Premier of this province speak repeatedly about transition funding for tobacco farmers, a fund which is to be created from the additional taxes that you're presently collecting on cigarettes and tobacco products. At a meeting of 1,700 farmers in my riding, the agriculture minister said, "We are prepared to create a \$50-million transition fund." I understand today the minister is meeting with his federal counterparts, hopefully to discuss this very issue. Minister, can you tell me and this House, have you given him authority to negotiate this transition fund at this meeting and, if so, have those dollars been allocated?

Hon Mr Duncan: The Minister of Agriculture, unlike the previous government, is meeting to resolve these issues. This government is trying to work out a co-operative arrangement to move this along faster—something that government didn't seem to want to do under any initiative.

I applaud the Minister of Agriculture for his efforts, not only on behalf of tobacco farmers but beef farmers and wheat farmers. This government is committed to the farming community in this province, to the rural community in this province, in a way that that government never was and never could be. I'll put his record up against yours any day of the week.

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): My question is to the Minister of Education. I fought long and hard against the Tories' flawed educational funding formula, one that has been ripping the heart out of our rural communities. Their one-size-fits-all approach to education created chaos in our rural schools.

School closures force rural students out of their own communities and on to longer bus rides. In fact, the first

school closed in Ontario by the former government was Romney Central School in my riding.

I'm pleased that our government recognizes that rural schools cannot adequately function under the constraints of a flawed formula. Students and parents are pleased that our government introduced a moratorium on school closures. We must be flexible in recognizing that schools are an important part of any community. Minister, can you assure this House that the interests of rural Ontario will be recognized?

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I want to commend the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex, who has been one of the strongest advocates for rural students and school bus safety in this House, for the experience that most of us who represent urban ridings don't have to recognize, which is when it comes to transportation, when it comes to the size of schools, there is a different education experience in this province. The one-size-fits-all of the last government closed 100 rural schools and made it much more different for the quality of education to be achieved there.

1440

What I can say is that the rural consideration is something that we acknowledge not only as part of our education commitment, but as part of our overall commitment to quality of life in Ontario. If you take rural schools out of rural communities the way that this past government did, you take the heart out of rural communities. So we have already begun to look at amending the funding formula and looking particularly in areas like transportation, the size of schools and the ability to access the same quality of programs as anywhere else in the province. We believe the quality of life in rural areas and education in rural areas should be as good as anywhere else in the province.

Mr Hoy: Minister, I've been contacted by many parents in my riding regarding the school board's proposal to change elementary and secondary school start times. This will result in students catching the bus up to 90 minutes earlier each and every day. Parents are deeply concerned that the early start time will affect their children's achievement.

The Tory government ignored rural Ontario. Parents want this Liberal government to take into consideration the unique challenges faced by rural students. Are you aware of the serious concerns parents have with busing in rural Ontario?

Hon Mr Kennedy: This is a serious question in terms of the amount of accommodation that has had to be devised by boards. They've been forced by the funding formula that was put in place by the previous government to go to all kinds of lengths. There has not been, in seven years of funding, a real funding formula to address transportation, so boards have had to go to extreme measures on their own.

What I can say to the member is that we will bring in a funding approach. We will do that in consultation with school boards and, just as importantly, with communities, to make sure that the impact of anything we do at

Queen's Park will result in only one thing: the better education of students. We will not make them sacrifice as they have in the last seven or eight years, due to a lack of commitment to public education. There is a commitment to those students, first and foremost. Whether it's busing start times or the actual instruction in classroom, those children's interests will come first and those communities will have a chance to have a say.

SEX OFFENDERS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. When I asked you a couple of days ago, you didn't appear to be aware of the Community Safety Act that I was trying to refer to, passed by our government in 1997. The act, as I understand it, gives police chiefs the authority to voluntarily notify their communities about the presence of a sex offender.

Clearly the Peel community wasn't advised of Douglas Moore's presence, a situation where René Charlebois's murder, and possibly others, may have actually been prevented. Are you prepared to amend the Community Safety Act to make it mandatory for police to notify their communities of a sex offender's presence?

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I'm sure the member must know, particularly since it was his government that brought in Christopher's Law, the Ontario sex offender registry act, that when an offender is in an institution, has been charged or is on parole, subsequent to April 1, 2001, they must report within 15 days and are put into the registry. If they have been convicted and discharged prior to that, the law does not allow that name to be put in. Now, you're talking about another act that has nothing to do with the Ontario registry for sexual offenders. That was what I was responding to.

Mr Dunlop: I understand Christopher's Law, and I understand your response on that. I'm referring to the Community Safety Act, which allows police officers to voluntarily make the presence of a sex offender known in the communities. I'm simply asking you, under the Community Safety Act, are you or are you not prepared to make it mandatory for police services to provide that to the communities?

Hon Mr Kwinter: Actually, the member doesn't seem to understand. The mandatory aspect of Christopher's Law is that a sexual offender who has been discharged from prison or is on parole must, within 15 days—this is mandated—report to the officials for the Ontario act.

It is up to the police to decide whether or not someone should be declared a dangerous offender. That is something the police have the authority to do. I happen to have confidence the police will do it when they think it's necessary. It isn't up to me to mandate when they should be doing operational activities. Under the act, Christopher's Law, that is mandated. The big issue of

discussion today is why it wasn't retroactive, and that was your responsibility when you brought that law in.

TOURISM

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): My question is to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Minister, the tourism industry in Ontario is still very much recovering from the shocks in the marketplace in the last few years. I want to tell you that in my riding of Niagara Falls and Niagara-on-the-Lake, they have also felt the shocks in the tourism industry. In fact, many small and medium-sized companies, such as travel agencies and tour companies, are still feeling the effects of the prolonged downturn in travel demand. My question to you is, what assistance are we providing to Ontario's travel industry to protect them from unnecessary financial risks and liability concerns?

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I want to thank the honourable member from Niagara Falls for the work he has done in promoting tourism, which is a vital part of the Ontario economy. It's a \$20-billion industry.

Just recently our ministry released the proposed regulations to the Travel Industry Act in Ontario. The current law, regrettably, does not give great protection to the travel agents themselves. If a large supplier such as an airline, a hotel or a cruise line company goes out of business, the small agency is the one that's held liable. We will be bringing forward legislation this spring that will limit the burden on the so-called end-supplier liability, because we believe the travel agencies should not be suffering unduly as a result of this failure.

I want to thank TICO, the Travel Industry Council of Ontario. I also want to thank ACTA for their comments and work, the honourable member and all those people who support the travel and tourism industry in this province.

Mr Craitor: Minister, given the recent press coverage about the instability in the airline sector, how is this proposed legislation going to protect consumers in Ontario?

Hon Mr Watson: The honourable member is quite right: It's a two-part strategy. Obviously we have to ensure that the small travel agencies are successful and viable and also that consumers are protected.

As the honourable member and members of this House may know, the Travel Industry Act allows for a compensation fund of up to \$5,000 per individual if a ticket is purchased through a registered travel agency, to a maximum of a \$5-million cap. If it's a large incident, that would be pro-rated. So the McGuinty government is very much committed to ensuring consumer protection for those people travelling.

While I have the floor, I want to also congratulate in advance the greatest hockey team in the history of Canada, the Ottawa Senators, as they compete tonight against the Toronto Maple Leafs. Go, Sens, go.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Health. Minister, for years now, property taxpayers have benefited from a bulk purchasing unit at the Ministry of Health. Fleet and Equipment Services provides 100 to 150 ambulances each year to municipalities around the province. Those municipalities save money because Fleet buys in bulk and sells ambulances to municipalities at cost. There is a concern among Fleet staff that your government is considering getting rid of the bulk purchase function from Fleet, and that would certainly drive up costs to municipalities. I ask you today, can you confirm that your government will maintain the bulk purchasing function at Fleet?

1450

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): When I took over as Minister of Health in this province, I came to understand that the previous government had made a decision and had planned to close the Judson Street ambulance service. Subsequently I received many letters, especially from smaller municipalities around the province, that indicated the service was essential to them, or at least that it was extremely convenient and, therefore, helpful.

I'm pleased to say that our government has taken the decision to reverse the previous government's decision and we're going to maintain those services. They will be delivered in a somewhat different way. I've been given every assurance, and I trust it to be correct, that the same kind of value pricing that was available then will be available in the future.

Ms Martel: I appreciate the response. If I might, I am concerned about the suggestion there will be change somehow in the operation. So I'd like the minister to do three things: firstly, to confirm with the OPSEU staff who work at Fleet that they indeed will not be losing their jobs and their position is secure; secondly, to reverse a change made by the previous government and allow Fleet to bid on municipal tenders for ambulances and ambulance equipment; and thirdly, guarantee the budget for 2004-05 so that the current staff, who want to keep their jobs, can work on orders for delivery for this coming year. Will you do that, Minister?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The member well knows, because OPSEU well knows, that there will be a modest implication on OPSEU jobs, that there will be in the change of—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Smitherman: With all due respect to the honourable member, you were closing it and wiping out 12 jobs. The changes we've made will cause dislocation for three individuals. What we're in a position, therefore, to be able to do is—this government, operating within the fiscal challenge, takes every opportunity we can to direct every penny that we can to the precious services that Ontarians require. We've been able to make an amendment to the plans from the previous government to keep this function alive and make sure it provides exactly the

same benefit it always has to the municipalities all across the province of Ontario.

TRAFFIC SIGNAL

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I have a question to the Minister of Transportation and it involves a very serious safety problem in my riding of Simcoe-Grey. I've raised this matter in this House before. In fact, when I raised it last week, you said no to me within an hour of me getting back to the office after raising it in this House, and that is the issue of the need for traffic signals at the entrance to the Nottawasaga Inn and the Green Briar housing development on Highway 89 east of Alliston in the town of New Tecumseth.

It's a very serious matter. Someone's going to get killed because the residents of Green Briar, of which there are several hundred, most of them senior citizens, can't get out, particularly around 3 o'clock each day when over 2,000 cars are going in each direction, so 4,000 cars around 3 o'clock each day when Honda just up the road changes shifts. You can't get out of the driveway to turn east or west without the possibility of getting killed.

So I ask you, Minister, since you said no last week, will you come with me, will you stand in the middle of the intersection at 3 o'clock in the afternoon and see if you don't fear for your own safety? Come on with me to my riding.

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I'm glad he was there counting cars. I will direct my staff to evaluate the situation. We are concerned about the safety situation and, if it is warranted, we will be more than pleased to install lights.

Mr Wilson: Your staff have already evaluated. In fact, your staff, your regional managers, the Honourable Frank Klees when Frank was minister back in June of last year, made the announcement at the Nottawasaga Inn that lights would be installed. Two weeks ago in the local paper, your regional Ministry of Transportation officials told reporters they had set aside \$80,000 for the lights, that they'd like to go ahead and do the lights.

Something happened since you guys came into office. You cancelled the lights, yet you haven't told your regional staff. They think they're still going to put the lights up. An hour after I raised this in this House last week, you sent me a letter saying no. Either you don't know what's going on in your ministry or you don't care about the safety of my constituents.

Someone's going to get killed. Two people got killed just a kilometre west of this location last year, two employees of the Nottawasaga Inn. Will you change your mind and say yes? If not, will you come with me any day of the week, around 3 o'clock, and see the thousands of cars and see what a safety issue this is for my constituents?

Hon Mr Takhar: When their government was in power, they determined that the traffic light was not

required. What I'm saying is that I will direct the ministry to redo the count, and if it is required, we will do it.

TOBACCO CONTROL

Mr Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): I have a question for the Minister of Health, but first I would like to thank him for coming to the Trillium Hospital and not only complimenting them but rewarding the Trillium Hospital with a cheque for best practices. It meant a lot to Mississauga South.

As you know, Ontario will be hosting a conference on tobacco control. In the past, junior representatives from tobacco companies have attended without much fanfare. This year, however, registrations started coming in, and many were surprised with the high number of senior executives from tobacco companies who registered to attend. Many people, including presenters, are arguing that the intent of the conference will be compromised and they have apparently started threatening to pull out. What message does it send to have executives from tobacco companies attending a provincially subsidized conference on tobacco control?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Similar to the question from the previous member, when I took on responsibility as Minister of Health, I found this incredible situation had occurred where the former minister had given direction to the ministry officials that they were to allow tobacco industry executives to be in attendance at those conferences where strategies were to be developed for the fight against tobacco.

I sent a letter to Mr Mel Martin, chair of the organizing committee, that said, in part, "I want to assure you that I recognize the committee's authority to make decisions" but that, "I would encourage the conference organizing committee to deregister tobacco industry representatives and I would ask that you fill the same spots with youth who are committed to the fight against smoking." And I'm very pleased today to say that the organizing committee did just that. Tobacco representatives will not be in place at the Ontario Tobacco Control Conference.

Mr Peterson: The public knows your commitment to make Ontarians the healthiest Canadians. You have an opportunity to send a message about our government's commitment to public health. What are you going to do to ensure that senior executives from tobacco companies do not attend the Tobacco Control Conference 2004?

Hon Mr Smitherman: As a result of the work that we've taken today, I can assure all members of the House that they won't. Further, I'm pleased to say that today I had the opportunity to speak at the Empire Club. I reached out and said to Ontarians that we need to start a revolution where people take back their own health, where they begin to make those small steps every single day in their life: one more set of stairs, five fewer cigarettes, lose a pound or two, do all that you can, and commit to the theme of continuous improvement. I think

continuous improvement is exactly the right theme for a government that is committed to continuously improving the quality of health care in Ontario.

PETITIONS

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I would like to include, again, several hundred more petitions that Joan Faria from Hamilton has been soliciting from seniors across the GTA.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To immediately commit to action and funding to ensure the rights and protection for our senior citizens living in nursing homes and retirement homes in Ontario."

I have attached my signature in support as well.

SEWAGE SLUDGE

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Petitions? I don't know how we'll go here because we have so many people standing. Member for Durham.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I have the greatest respect for the motion you just made.

My petition—I wish the Minister of the Environment were here listening. Well, she is here. I hope she's listening.

"This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Durham riding have raised concerns over the spreading and storage of sewage sludge and biosolids;

"Whereas Bill 149 was introduced by Durham MPP John O'Toole to regulate the spreading and storage of sewage sludge and biosolids, including paper sludge;

"Whereas Bill 149 would require that no person shall spread sewage sludge or other biosolids without a certificate of approval or provisional certificate of approval from the director;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to" immediately "pass Bill 149 to amend the Environmental Assessment Act and add the" new "relevant section regarding the spreading and storage of sewage sludge."

I'm pleased to support this on behalf of Deb Vice, Martin Feaver and the other members of my riding.

1500

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): I'm pleased to present a petition from over 1,200 students from St Peter

High School in my neighbourhood of Fallingbrook in Ottawa-Orléans.

"Whereas the city of Ottawa has been smoke-free since August 2001; and

"Whereas we, the students of St Peter High School in Ottawa, think that all of the people of Ontario deserve to be protected from tobacco smoke;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to pass legislation without delay to make the whole province smoke-free in all public and work places."

TILLSONBURG DISTRICT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition signed by 1,600 of my residents.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital has asked for ministerial consent to make capital changes to its facility to accommodate the placement of a satellite dialysis unit; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has already given approval for the unit and committed operational dollars to it; and

"Whereas the community has already raised the funds for the equipment needed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care give his final approval of the capital request change from the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital immediately, so those who are in need of these life-sustaining dialysis services can receive them locally, thereby enjoying a better quality of life without further delay."

I affix my signature to this petition.

RENT BANK PROGRAMS

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas secure and stable housing is fundamental to the well-being of individuals and families; and

"Whereas communities cannot thrive unless they meet the basic needs of their citizens; and

"Whereas the previous government ignored the concerns of tenants;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support the McGuinty government's plan to establish and expand rent bank programs across the province, in order to protect those that, due to an emergency, cannot meet their rent payments;

"To introduce real tenant protection legislation that will protect tenants from excessive rent increases."

RIGHT TO LIFE

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I've been asked to present this petition by Mr Colum Tingle, on behalf of residents of Parkdale-High Park. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the right to life is guaranteed unless limits to it are prescribed by law (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, sections 7 and 1);

"Whereas the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms applies to the government of Ontario, the Legislature of Ontario and all matters within the authority of the Legislature of Ontario, (section 32.1), including the regulation of the practice of pharmacy;

"Whereas the right to live is limitless in that neither case law nor statute law prescribes limits to the right of life;

"Whereas drugs, health care aids and devices whose purpose is the limitation of the right to life are provided through members of the Ontario College of Pharmacists;

"Whereas honouring the guarantee of the rights and freedoms of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is in the public interest;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To call on the government of Ontario to require, in the public interest, the council of the Ontario College of Pharmacists to make a regulation to prohibit pharmacists keeping, compounding and dispensing drugs or providing health care aids and devices whose intended use is limiting the right to life unless appropriate limits to the right to life are prescribed by law."

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals by no means campaigned on raising the rates associated with the Ontario drug benefit program; and

"Whereas the majority of seniors, many of which live on a fixed income, cannot meet the expense of higher costs for essential medication; and

"Whereas seniors in Simcoe-Grey and across Ontario should never have to make the choice between eating and filling a prescription;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To cancel any plans to raise costs for prescription drugs for our seniors and to embark on making vital medication more affordable for Ontarians."

It's signed by several hundred people from my riding, and I affix my signature.

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I have another series of petitions; we're up to over 2,500 at this point.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government was elected after promising in their election platform that they were committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit pro-

gram for seniors but are now considering delisting drugs and imposing user fees on seniors; and

"Whereas prescription drugs are not covered under the Canada Health Act unless dispensed in a hospital; and

"Whereas the federal Liberal government refuses to acknowledge this as a necessary health service despite the Romanow report's strong support for a national drug program;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately and unequivocally commit to end plans for the delisting of drugs for coverage under the Ontario drug benefit program;

"To immediately commit to ending plans to implement higher user fees for seniors and to improve the Ontario drug benefit plan so they can obtain necessary medications; and

"To instruct Premier McGuinty to demand more health care funding from Ottawa instead of demanding more funding from seniors."

And this has my support as well.

RECREATIONAL TRAILERS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present a petition primarily to the Minister of Finance, but to the House today. It's probably the largest petition I've ever had.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas recreational trailers kept at parks and campgrounds in Ontario are being assessed by the Municipal Property Assessment Corp, MPAC, and are subject to property taxes; and

"Whereas owners of these trailers are seasonal and occasional residents who contribute to the local economy through tourism, without requiring significant municipal services; and

"Whereas the added burden of this taxation will make it impossible for many families of modest income to afford their holiday sites at parks and campgrounds" throughout Ontario;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That these seasonal trailers not be subject to retroactive taxation for the year 2003; and that the tax not be imposed in 2004; and that no such tax be introduced without consultation with owners of the trailers and trailer parks, municipal governments, businesses, the tourism sector and other stakeholders."

I'm pleased to endorse this on behalf of the many people looking forward to affordable vacations this summer.

SEWAGE SLUDGE

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): A petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the residents Wasaga Beach, wish to bring forth our concerns regarding the transfer of

approximately 5,700 tonnes of 14-year-old sludge, which contains metals from the North Simcoe transfer station, to our recently closed landfill site. To date, there are no EBR requirements for hauled sewage.

"Due to this and the geography of the Wasaga Beach site being so close to the longest freshwater beach in the world and other sensitive areas, there exists a threat to the environment and the public's health. The questionable product should be moved to a desolate location. Once damaged, the environment and people cannot be replaced;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: To stop the sludge from being transferred to Wasaga Beach."

I'm a resident of Wasaga Beach, and I support my constituents with this petition.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I just happen to have another petition of thousands, I might say, that the people of Durham have confidence I will present to the House on their behalf.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in Ontario adopted adults are denied a right available to all non-adoptees; that is, the unrestricted right to identifying information concerning their family of origin; and

"Whereas Canada has ratified standards of civil and human rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;

"Whereas these rights are denied to persons affected by the secrecy provisions in the adoption sections of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas research in other jurisdictions has demonstrated that disclosure does not cause harm, that access to such information is beneficial to adult adoptees, adoptive parents and birth parents, and that birth parents rarely requested or were promised anonymity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact revisions of the Child and Family Services Act and to other acts to:

"Permit adult adoptees unrestricted access to full personal identifying birth information;

"Permit birth parents, grandparents and siblings access to the adopted person's amended birth certificate when the adopted person reaches age 18;

"Permit adoptive parents unrestricted access to identifying birth information of their minor children;

"Allow adopted persons with birth relatives to file a contact veto restricting contact by the searching party; and

"Replace mandatory reunion counselling with optional counselling."

I'm pleased to present this on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

1510

LCBO OUTLET

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I have a petition for an LCBO agency store in Baxter.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the LCBO agency store program is intended to revitalize our small towns and villages and to provide rural consumers with responsible and convenient access to LCBO services,

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make available to the village of Baxter an LCBO agency store."

I more than support this petition and sign it.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Our constituency office is always open to accept petitions from all concerned parties within Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's seniors have worked long and hard to build the outstanding quality of life the citizens of Ontario enjoy today; and

"Whereas seniors' drug benefits enable older persons to lead healthier lives and avoid more complex care in hospitals and nursing homes; and

"Whereas in addition to their taxes, many seniors already contribute towards their prescription drugs through deductibles and dispensing fees; and

"Whereas the vast majority of seniors face increasing costs on fixed pensions and cannot afford to see their incomes eroded further;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not eliminate or reduce the provincial drug benefits provided to seniors."

I'm pleased to present this on behalf of the constituents of Durham.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on source water protection which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented by Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I'm pleased to sign that.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PUBLIC SECTOR SALARY DISCLOSURE
AMENDMENT ACT, 2003LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA DIVULGATION
DES TRAITEMENTS
DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 31, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 15, An Act to amend the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 15, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur la divulgation des traitements dans le secteur public.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I believe I have unanimous consent to move a motion with respect to Bill 15.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent as the House leader requested? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that Bill 15 be immediately called for second reading and that the bill proceed in such a manner that one member for the NDP be allowed to speak for up to 20 minutes with no questions or comments, and following this speech the question on second reading be immediately put, that the order for third reading be immediately called and the question on third reading be immediately put without debate or amendment and that any bells be limited to five minutes.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Let me say that the reason I want to speak to this legislation

is that there's a bit of history here. The government of the day wants to claim credit now for exposing the fact that salaries, bonuses and insider contracts at Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One have gone through the roof. Of course, they will point to the previous government and say it's all their fault.

I just want to, as I say, refer to a bit of history. The former government decided that they were going to privatize Ontario's hydro system, and so they brought forward an act in 1998 called the Electricity Act. The Electricity Act basically made it clear that Ontario Power Generation was going to be privatized and Hydro One was going to be privatized. Their view was that this would lead us into a new era of lower-priced electricity and a greater security of supply of electricity. It was going to clean up our air and it was basically going to resolve any problems that we might have in terms of a looming energy shortage.

I just want to remind people that four years later—well, now it's six years later—here we are. If you check your hydro bill and compare it with what it was four years ago, the hydro bill has doubled now. The electricity shortage is worse than ever. Yes, the air in southern Ontario is dirtier than ever. And oh, yes, the lights went out. That's how successful this privatization strategy was.

Now we find, and it's disclosed almost every day, that there were a whole bunch of insiders who were indeed lined up at the trough ready to fill their pockets. We've had examples of people making \$4 million or \$5 million on insider contracts. In fact, the dream team that was hired for the restoration of Pickering A made off with \$40 million over a period of about two years and then left town, and left, obviously, an inadequate or bad job in their wake.

What I want people to notice is that in fact it was not just Conservatives who voted for this; Liberals voted for this as well. The very government that now wants to somehow take credit and say that they're cleaning up things was very much in favour of this exact privatization. In fact, I have a few quotes.

This is one quote from Dalton McGuinty. What did Mr McGuinty have to say? Well, in February 2001 he said, just like the Conservatives, "We believe you've got to go toward deregulation. That's the way to bring this thing to heel. That's the way to introduce real competition."

Then, in October 2001, Mr McGuinty said, "Throughout Ontario's electricity restructuring process, Dalton and the Ontario Liberals have been consistent supporters of the move to an open electricity market in Ontario."

In December 2001, when someone named Mike Harris announced that he was going to privatize not only Ontario Power Generation but Hydro One, Mr McGuinty said, "I think that it's important that we move ahead with competition, both in terms of generation and in terms of transmission."

In May 2002, when the deregulated market opened, Mr McGuinty said, "My party supports competition in the generation of electricity."

So it's very clear that it wasn't just Conservatives who were all in favour of creating a privatized electricity system; it was Liberals as well. Now, I suppose some are going to argue that they didn't know that as an offshoot of this move to privatization, a whole bunch of people were going to be lined up at the trough hoping to cash in, because that's clearly what happened. If you look at the contract with, for example, Graham Brown, who was the chief operating officer at Ontario Power Generation, part of his contract was that when privatization occurred, he was going to get a whole bunch of shares at a very low price. In other words, he was going to be able to cash in. And if for some reason privatization didn't happen, he would get a \$1-million bonus: very clear. Here was an insider who was all prepared to cash in on the privatization of our hydroelectricity system. Very clear: If you look at some of the memos that were floating around, memos from inside the former government's offices involving some of the consultants, what they were proposing in the privatization was to sell shares in Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One at much below value, so that the insiders who got their hands on it would overnight potentially make millions of dollars, if not tens of millions of dollars, not because they had done anything particularly brilliant but had literally walked in and picked the public's pocket.

1520

I suppose Liberals will say, "Well, we had no idea this might happen." Let me just say that if Liberals had done their research, if they had looked at what happened under the privatizations of Margaret Thatcher in Britain, they would have known immediately this was going to happen.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Maurice Strong.

Hon Mr Duncan: Maurice Strong.

Mr Hampton: The Liberals want to talk about that good Liberal Maurice Strong. Yes, I would be happy to talk about that good Liberal Maurice Strong, who proposed privatization between 1990 and 1995 and was shot down, was told it was not on.

If Liberals had even taken a second to look at what happened with the privatization of hydroelectricity in Great Britain, what they would have found was that as the government of the day there set the British electrical system up for privatization, a whole bunch of insiders, a whole bunch of corporate executives immediately set themselves up to purchase shares at far below their value and overnight became multi-millionaires. That's exactly what happened in Britain. In fact, it was so serious in Britain that when the Labour government was elected, they imposed a \$6-billion excess profit tax on the recently privatized hydroelectric utilities.

What was being lined up here in Ontario, the \$2-million contract, the \$2-million salary for Eleanor Clitheroe—as a publicly owned entity, her salary at Hydro One was \$500,000. As soon as the government said, "Move to privatization," salary and bonuses bumped up to \$2.2 million, plus the \$1-million-a-year

pension, plus the \$6-million severance allowance, plus the \$173,000-a-year car allowance, the \$330,000-a-year limousine allowance, the housing allowance, and oh, yes, the yacht.

That was all expected. If you followed what had happened in Great Britain, if you followed what had happened in New Zealand, this is very much part of what happens when an essential service everyone needs is turned over to profit-driven private corporations that really couldn't care less about the quality of service people get, and frankly, couldn't care less how high the hydro bill is driven up. They simply want to make a lot of money. That's what happened in Britain, what happened in New Zealand, and we see all the evidence now in Ontario.

I just want to remind all the members of the Liberal government, this is as much your action, this is as much your program as it was the program of the previous Conservative government. In this Legislature, when the electricity privatization, the electricity competition act came up for a vote, you voted with the Conservatives. When you were asked for your position, time and time again your position was the same as the Conservatives. You were in favour of privatization, you were in favour of deregulation, and you saw the open electricity market and the privatization that went along with it as an excellent idea.

So if I were you, I would perhaps quiet your voices a bit, as you try to take credit for this salary disclosure bill, because all you are disclosing is in fact the very mistake you made by supporting something that's been a failure in Great Britain, New Zealand, California and Montana, and even creates all kinds of problems in Alberta for Ralph Klein.

I just want to make a couple of further comments. I notice over the past couple of months, as all of the debris of privatization, all of the at-the-trough episodes of hydro privatization, have come before the public, every once in a while somebody puts a microphone in front of the Minister of Energy's face and says to him, "Are you going to stop privatization? Does this rule out further privatization?" And—surprise, surprise—does he say no? Does he say, "There will be no further privatization"? Does he say that any further privatization, any further feeding at the trough, is going to be stopped? No, he doesn't.

In fact, what we saw in the announcement that was made last week by the Minister of Natural Resources—just as the Conservatives were going to take the good potential water hydroelectricity sites on crown land and put them up for privatization, just as the former Conservative government was going to privatize the best wind-power opportunities on public land, on crown land, what did the Liberals announce? They're privatizing it too. Those sites, and especially the water sites, which have the potential to develop hydroelectricity at a very low cost, are going to be turned over to profit-driven corporations—exactly as the Conservatives said, exactly as the Conservatives did and exactly as the Conservatives were prepared to do in the future.

I say to people at home, what does this mean for you? There's a very good example with four of the hydro dams that were privatized by the Conservatives. Four hydro dams on the Mississagi River, between Sudbury and Sault Ste Marie, in north-eastern Ontario, were in effect sold by the former Conservative government to a private company, Brascan. They were sold for a price far less than they were worth. Then, when the market was opened, when we moved unfortunately to deregulation, electricity that cost a little more than half a cent a kilowatt hour to produce at those hydro stations—suddenly the public was paying six, seven, eight cents a kilowatt hour. You, the public, were paying 10 times what it cost to produce that electricity. That's how the hydro bill can double. That's how the hydro bill can go through the roof.

One would have thought that if the Liberals were really concerned about protecting the public, about ensuring that the public was not going to be paying 10 and 15 times what it costs to produce the electricity, they would have said, "Not only will no other water sites be privatized, but those four that were sold off for a song will be brought back into public not-for-profit operation." They haven't done any of that.

To put this in context for people—think for a moment—if it cost General Motors \$5,000 to produce a car and then they said to you, "But we'll only sell you the car if you pay \$50,000," just about everyone would say, "That's a rip-off. I shouldn't be paying 10 times what it cost to produce the car." But that is exactly what is happening with a lot of the hydroelectric power that is now being produced in the province since it's been privatized and that's exactly what Liberals are prepared to allow to happen even more.

What does this mean to the average person? It means the hydro bill continues to skyrocket. It means we're being set up for more and more announcements of 10%, 20%, 30% increases in hydroelectricity rates.

1530

I say to the government, I say to the Minister of Energy, while this legislation is needed to repair some of the damage that was done by hydro privatization, some of the damage that you supported, that you voted for, that you spoke in favour of, and some of the damage you're now prepared to be even more complicit in, if you look at the record; while this bill may—may—repair a little bit of the damage, it frankly doesn't go nearly far enough. Simply disclosing that a whole bunch of people were lined up to make a lot of money, a lot of inside money, as a result of the privatization of an essential service that everybody in the province needs and that everybody needs every day, simply disclosing that that was going to happen, isn't enough. If you were truly interested in defending consumers in this province, in ensuring the industry and business have affordable supplies of electricity and sustainable supplies of electricity, you'd be doing much more. You would be stopping the open market; you would be shutting down that open market. You would be saying to the Brascans of Ontario, "Here we're going to refund the money that you paid for the

four dams on the Mississagi River, but those dams are now coming back under public control and they are going to provide electricity at cost," not at 10 times what it costs, which is what's happening now. You would not be setting up the best remaining hydro sites on crown land for privatization. You would not be taking the best wind power sites on crown land and setting those up for privatization. But that is exactly what is happening.

Just one final point, some at home may be wondering, "Why would so many within OPG and Hydro One be offered such bonuses and such substantial increases in their salaries?" It works like this: There were a lot of people within Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation who said very clearly, "Privatization is wrong; deregulation is wrong. It is going to drive up people's hydro bills. It is going to result in situations where a lot of people won't be able to pay the hydro bill. It is going to cause considerable pain for small businesses and industries that have to have an affordable, reliable supply of electricity." And do you know what those people were told? Again, this was all repeated in Great Britain. They were told, "Keep quiet, don't say anything, don't raise a fuss, and if you don't raise a fuss, there will be some money in it for you."

That's exactly what happened. With some people it happened in terms of lucrative inside contracts. In terms of the Graham Browns of the world, they got contracts which said, "When privatization occurs, you'll get all kinds of stock at a grossly reduced price. You'll be made into a multi-millionaire overnight." Other people who were maybe not in the executive positions were simply told, "If you keep quiet and don't oppose privatization and deregulation, there will be some money in it for you too." That's clearly what was going on. That's what happened in Great Britain, that's what happened in New Zealand, and that's clearly what was scheduled to happen here.

I simply hand a challenge to the Minister of Energy. You've had six months now where you've been able to sort of spin the media by blaming it on the Conservatives, but in the next couple of weeks you have to be very clear about how you're now going to handle the challenge. You have to be very clear on where the new supplies are coming from; you have to be very clear on issues of pricing. You finally have to put forward a plan on how you propose to close the five coal-fired stations, because we haven't heard that plan yet. In fact, what we've seen is a lot of fiddling while coal burns. So while this is a minor step that discloses some of the damage that was done by privatization and much more damage that would happen if privatization continued, it is not nearly enough, not nearly enough to protect the interests of consumers and protect the public of Ontario with this essential service.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Mr Duncan has moved second reading of Bill 15, An Act to

amend the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

PUBLIC SECTOR SALARY DISCLOSURE AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA DIVULGATION DES TRAITEMENTS DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

Mr Duncan moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 15, An Act to amend the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 15, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur la divulgation des traitements dans le secteur public.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Further debate?

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

HEALTH INFORMATION PROTECTION ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION DES RENSEIGNEMENTS SUR LA SANTÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 5, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 31, An Act to enact and amend various Acts with respect to the protection of health information / Projet de loi 31, Loi édictant et modifiant diverses lois en ce qui a trait à la protection des renseignements sur la santé.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Mr Smitherman has moved second reading of Bill 31.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The Acting Speaker: Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that the bill be sent to the general government committee.

The Acting Speaker: The bill is referred to the standing committee on general government.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Duncan has move adjournment of the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until Tuesday at 1:30 pm.

The House adjourned at 1537.

ERRATA

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Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 13 April 2004

Mardi 13 avril 2004



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 13 April 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 13 avril 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I rise today to make a statement on behalf of our caucus with regard to a press release which was just sent out. The release proudly announces just under \$18 million for Ontario's apprenticeship programs. It appears that the money is to go to the colleges for upgrading their classrooms and equipment. I would like to point out to the members present that although this may seem like a positive announcement, the previous government had done and was prepared to do much more with these programs.

Since 2000, the Progressive Conservative government had invested \$120 million to revitalize the apprenticeship system. This program included expansion of the Ontario youth apprenticeship program, a pre-apprenticeship program for high schools, a journeyperson training program, enhancement to the apprenticeship innovation fund and much more. As well, the 2003 budget included important initiatives like a new training model, which combined a college diploma and apprenticeship; \$5 million to launch the second round of TVOntario's lifelong learning challenge fund, to focus on apprenticeship trades; and a refundable apprenticeship tax credit to encourage Ontario businesses to hire trained apprentices.

It's one thing for the Premier and the minister to announce a small, one-time amount of funding for training and then fill a press release with empty platitudes about the importance of a skills-based economy. It is quite another to have a comprehensive plan for Ontario's apprentices, the system that trains them and lowers taxes for the businesses which need to hire them.

HOCKEY

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I rise today to speak to a matter of great importance to the people of Etobicoke-Lakeshore. Etobicoke has now, and always had, a great love for hockey. Etobicoke-Lakeshore is a community with one of the strongest hockey traditions in this province. The Faustina Sports Club, one of the oldest in Toronto, has been around since

1935. Hundreds of Etobicoke families spend the weekend at the hockey rink.

In Etobicoke, we also have a long history of hockey greats. Johnny Bower, who provided outstanding goaltending to the Leafs when they won four Stanley Cups, including the one in 1967, is a long-time Etobicoke resident and a member of the Etobicoke Sports Hall of Fame. Other members of the Etobicoke Sports Hall of Fame are Ken Dryden and Paul Henderson, two names with which hockey fans will surely be familiar. Current Leafs who have roots or have chosen to make their home in Etobicoke include Drake Berehowsky, Matt Stajan, Aki Berg, Tom Fitzgerald and assistant coach Rick Ley. And to top it off, the Lakeshore Lions Memorial Arena in Etobicoke-Lakeshore is the practice facility for the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Etobicoke-Lakeshore residents truly love our Leafs, so when the Leafs beat the Senators in the not-too-distant future, I will have Leafs flags at the ready for all the Senators fans to fly on their cars. I know all my Toronto colleagues will join me in a heartfelt, "Go, Leafs, go!"

HATE CRIMES

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I'm asking all members to join me in condemning in the strongest possible terms an act of vandalism that occurred over Easter weekend. This act was terrible because it can only be interpreted as being anti-Semitic and racist.

As reported in the Kitchener-Waterloo Record, the National Post and the Globe and Mail, vandals attacked and knocked over 12 large headstones in the historic Beth Jacob cemetery located in the city of Kitchener. This act strikes a sickening chord for the Jewish community in our riding of Waterloo-Wellington and for the Jewish people everywhere who are listening to story after story of hateful vandalism, desecration, and recently even a fire-bombing—in Canada, a country known worldwide for the strength of our democracy, diversity and tolerance for people of all nations and creeds. Our freedoms and liberties depend on these principles. To keep them alive, we must never weaken our resolve to speak out against, eradicate and punish fully all hate crimes, those we know to be committed against people based on who they are or how they pray.

What made these acts particularly despicable is that they occurred during both Passover and Easter weekend, a time to celebrate hope and redemption for both Christians and Jews. Before coming to the House today, I

spoke with Gordon Strauss, president of the Beth Jacob synagogue. I told him how badly I felt about this and wished him and his community the best through this horror that we are enduring together. Let this statement and all actions we take contribute not to undue publicity for these cowardly acts but to condemning such acts by refusing to sit back while people are denigrated by crimes of hate and inhumanity.

FERRERO GROUP

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I'm pleased to rise today to share with the House the very sweet fortune that has come to the city of Brantford in my riding of Brant.

On Thursday, the Ferrero Group announced that they are finalizing plans for their new manufacturing plant, to be located in Brantford. As one of the world leaders in confectionary products, Ferrero is known for making such sweets as Kinder Surprise, Ferrero Rocher, Tic Tacs and Nutella, to name just a few of their brand-name products. This is exciting news for those of us in Brantford who had been promoting the city with hopes of further economic development. My great, great thanks to all of the behind-the-scenes workers and staff, along with council. While the exact size and number of employees has not yet been confirmed, we know it's sizable. This new investment in Brantford is a welcome addition to the growing list of multinational corporations that have recently announced moves into the Brantford area.

The Ferrero Group's decision to locate its manufacturing plant in Brantford is a result of the company's assessment of their needs during development of a global chocolate industry. While the company is based in Italy and Luxembourg, it has expanded production lines to 16 locations worldwide. Brantford was chosen following an extensive North American site review process. We in Brantford are thrilled to be included in Ferrero's expansion plans.

Brantford is a city that has a great deal to offer corporations like the Ferrero Group that are looking for ways to grow and develop. I sincerely hope that other companies will come to see the potential that the riding of Brant offers to members of those companies and many others across the world.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the Ferrero Group to Brantford, thank them for recognizing our potential, and again say thanks for the hard work of all the backroom people who did an awful lot of work on our behalf.

1340

GENERAL MOTORS OF CANADA

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to congratulate General Motors of Canada on its many environmental initiatives. My Durham riding takes pride in being the birthplace of General Motors of Canada, with the original McLaughlin carriage being built in Tyrone and Enniskillen before Colonel Sam McLaughlin established General Motors in Oshawa.

Here are just a few points of interest concerning GM's environmental stewardship.

GM has reduced CO₂ emissions from its facilities by 35% since 1990. General Motors of Canada has won more Natural Resources Canada EnerGuide fuel efficiency awards than any other auto manufacturer. General Motors offers a wide range of alternative-fuel vehicles, including natural gas, E-85 ethanol and E-10 ethanol.

GM has been recognized for supporting the McLaughlin Bay Wildlife Preserve, located next to its corporate headquarters in Oshawa. The company has received awards from groups such as Durham Region Field Naturalists, Friends of the Second Marsh and the city of Oshawa.

GM's hybrid electric technology enables fuel economy improvements of up to 50% over conventional buses, while reducing emissions.

I'd like to extend my congratulations and the congratulations of this House to General Motors of Canada and its 22,000 personnel nationwide in their pursuit of environmental excellence.

RIDING OF NIPISSING

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I rise today to speak of three great assets in my riding: the North Bay Rotary Club, the children's treatment centre and our just-retired mayor, Jack Burrows.

Just over two weeks ago, I attended a tribute dinner for Jack Burrows. Jack was the mayor for nine years and was active in public life for over 15. In November, he retired as mayor but agreed to be the honorary chair for the fundraising initiative for the children's treatment centre of North Bay.

The CTC is a new initiative in our region. It will be the 20th in the province. It was approved two years ago, and the steering committee has been working diligently since then. The executive director was hired in January, and the excitement is growing as we get closer to being able to provide integrated health services for the children of our community. It is a true community initiative.

The North Bay Rotary Club took on the challenge and has been fundraising for this initiative over the last year. On Friday, March 26, they hosted a tribute dinner for Jack Burrows, where they raised over \$20,000 for our new children's treatment centre.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate and thank our Rotary Club for its great initiative and all the hard work it does in our area. I want to commit my support to the children's treatment centre and a commitment to work with them on the development of the program. And I want to join with my community in paying tribute to our former mayor. I just want to say, as did everyone in North Bay on that day, thanks, Jack.

NATIVE HOUSING

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Mr Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to give my statement.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Bisson: It was kind of tough to get it out of my own caucus, but I want to thank the rest of the House.

I want to take this opportunity to raise with members a very serious issue that's happening not only in our riding of Timmins-James Bay but certainly is happening in Kenora and a few other ridings across the north of the province, and that is the despicable situation of housing in native communities. As the ministers across the way know, as well as former Conservatives who were ministers and certainly myself and Mr Hampton, the member for Kenora, when it comes to taking care of our First Nations, this nation at times doesn't have a lot to be proud of, to put it bluntly.

As we travel into native communities across northern Ontario, we see substandard housing and a situation that's been perpetuated by years and years of underfunding by the federal government. I'm here today as a provincial member to try to suggest something new, that maybe the province should recognize that people who live in communities like Attawapiskat and others live in the province of Ontario and, as such, should get some attention—that means money—from the provincial government to assist with the desperate situation of housing in those communities.

You would know that last winter Global Television, along with CBC and others, came up to report on the conditions of housing in but one community, Attawapiskat. I want people to know two things: It's not just in Attawapiskat, but in many communities in northern reserves north of 50, and it's a situation that's intolerable. I'm calling on the government to work with us to try to find a way to address some provincial dollars toward a very serious issue in those communities so people can get the housing they deserve and need.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): There was very interesting news as I awoke this morning and listened to CFRB and read my copy of the Toronto Sun: Premier Dalton McGuinty's approval rating—25%; in fact, a 75% disapproval rating for Premier McGuinty. The Sun article has the sub-headline "GTA survey finds Premier McGuinty floundering at the bottom of the pile in public approval." Premier McGuinty's honeymoon is shorter than that of Britney Spears and Jason Alexander, and a lot less enjoyable. In fact, only 2% of the population found the Premier's performance to be excellent. I guess they got hold of the finance minister in Vaughan to answer the phone as part of the survey.

Do you know what? It's no surprise that 75% of the population is giving the thumbs-down to Premier McGuinty in his first six months in office. This is no surprise; look at the long and growing list of broken promises: broke their promise on the Oak Ridges moraine; broke their promise to decrease auto insurance by 20%; broke their promise to freeze hydro rates; broke their promise on the extension of funding to those who

suffer from autism, among many others, all documented on promisebreakersclub.com. This Premier could beat Pinocchio in a nose-growing contest, hands down. No surprise, because we've seen a lack of vision, a lack of leadership and a lack of any ability whatsoever to keep promises. That explains your 75% McGuinty disapproval rating.

HATE CRIMES

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): I too rise in sadness and outrage today to condemn events that took place in Kitchener over the weekend. As members have heard, in acts disturbingly reminiscent of those that happened in Toronto several weeks ago, 12 gravestones in Kitchener's Beth Jacob cemetery were toppled. Although this has not been officially classified as a hate crime, it seems it is more than a crucial coincidence that a Jewish cemetery was targeted during the high holiday of Passover. I know the authorities are working hard to bring the vandals to justice.

Some of the targets of recent hate crimes in Ontario have even been Holocaust survivors. In my community, the son of two Holocaust survivors, whose parents are buried in Beth Jacob cemetery, has anonymously offered a reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the perpetrators.

These attacks have inspired Ontarians to stand together to condemn these acts of hatred and intolerance and to make it clear that an attack upon one group is an attack upon us all. I know I speak for all members of my community and this Legislature when I say that we denounce all hateful acts and stand behind the Jewish communities in Kitchener-Waterloo and across Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE), 2004 LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (CONGÉ FAMILIAL POUR RAISON MÉDICALE)

Mr Bentley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 56, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family medical leave and other matters / Projet de loi 56, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour raison médicale et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Bentley.

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I'll defer my statement to ministerial statements.

1350

HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ

Mrs Witmer moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 57, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act to make various immunizations insured services / Projet de loi 57, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé afin que diverses immunisations deviennent des services assurés.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): This bill amends the Health Insurance Act to provide that the administration of immunization against chicken pox and pneumococcal and meningococcal disease is covered by the Ontario health insurance plan. This bill takes it a step further to provide for immunization against not just meningitis C, but also chicken pox and pneumococcal disease. As we know, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization has recommended that all children, excluding those with specific allergies, receive these immunizations. Some provinces already cover the cost of these vaccines. However, in our province, parents must pay out of their own pocket.

I believe it's important that all children in this province have access to these vaccines. I believe that's an important principle of medicare. This is an opportunity for the government to keep its promise to parents and children to provide chicken pox and meningitis vaccines to all children who wish it.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list of private members' public business: Mr Peterson and Mr Leal exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Peterson assumes ballot item 14 and Mr Leal assumes ballot item 11.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE

CONGÉ FAMILIAL POUR RAISON MÉDICALE

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour):

Today I had the privilege of introducing An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family medical leave and other matters. As a government we are delivering positive change for Ontario families, employees and employers. This bill, if passed, would provide up to eight weeks of job-protected, unpaid time off work for those taking care of seriously ill family members.

Years ago we made a decision, as a society, to be with people during the happy times, through maternity and parental leave. This is a statement that we are prepared to be there to support people in the difficult times at the end of life. That is why we have introduced this legislation to protect people's jobs while they care for a gravely ill member.

On ne devrait pas avoir à choisir entre perdre son emploi et demeurer au chevet de son père, de sa mère ou de son enfant qui se meurt. Une société humaine et bienveillante n'imposerait pas un tel choix, et en tout cas ce gouvernement ne le fera pas.

Instead, Mr Speaker, we are asking members of this House to pass legislation which would give working people the ability to take up to eight weeks from their jobs to help their son or daughter, their mother or father or their spouse through the last days of life.

Other amendments contained in this bill would reflect the existing law of Ontario. The amendments would ensure that provisions in the Employment Standards Act, 2000, be written to reflect the fact that they apply to people in a same-sex relationship, whether married or common-law.

The health of the people of Ontario is our most precious resource. We share responsibility to protect our citizens from harm and to care for them in time of need. When families take on the responsibility of becoming caregivers, we owe them our support.

It is clear that an aging population and significantly increasing workplace demands have contributed to high levels of employee stress due to work-family conflict. As a government that cares about people, we are committed to looking after the needs of Ontario families.

A recent Ipsos-Reid poll found that patient care is a growing concern, with almost one third, 32%, of Canadian adults now responsible for the care of older relatives. Dependant care responsibilities can constitute a major time commitment for many workers. This time commitment becomes even greater should the dependent family member become seriously ill. Most of our work-life schedules do not include the additional time to provide the necessary care and support for seriously ill

dependants, which might range from a few days off to arrange for care to several weeks off to be with a loved one who is dying.

To make this time, employees must make a very difficult choice: do their job or provide the care. This is an impossible choice, and the stress of it shows. Reports indicate that employees forced to make the choice are twice as likely to miss work because they are physically or emotionally fatigued. They're 13 times more likely to miss three or more days of work in a six-month period, trying to care for dependants.

That is not all. More than 40% of employees caring for a seriously ill family member have had to quit their job. One quarter of them lost all or most of their savings. This is simply wrong. This government does not believe that anyone should lose their job because they are caring for a parent or child who is dying. Unfortunately, that is exactly what has been happening.

This bill will help caregiving employees by protecting their job, supporting the work-life balance they're struggling to achieve and relieving stress. That is what a society should do.

So what of Ontario's businesses and their needs? The stress borne by employees translates into a cost to employers and businesses. It is a cost not often appreciated; however, it is a fact. Employees making the impossible choice are less productive. They're often forced by circumstance into unplanned absences. When employees are forced to quit their job, the employers lose their skills, training and experience as well as their work.

The costs to businesses are massive. The direct costs of absenteeism alone, due to high levels of caregiver stress, have been estimated to be over \$1 billion per year in Canada. The indirect costs are an additional \$1 billion to \$2 billion per year.

Workplaces are better off when employees can take time off and come back to work able to focus once again on their job and not a personal crisis. The inescapable conclusion is that by relieving caregiver stress, we would reduce the cost to businesses and make workplaces more productive. This bill is good for employees and employers.

What of those who need the care? The bill would help to support the dignity of those in the last stages of life. Palliative care studies indicate that more than three quarters, 80%, of Canadians would prefer to spend their last days at home and not in a hospital or other institution, and yet only one quarter are actually able to do so. The availability of care from family members will allow many to remain in familiar surroundings for much longer. They will have the comfort and support of those dearest to them at the time when they need it most.

It goes without saying that the availability of family medical leave will support our existing health care services. In some cases, it might reduce the demand for those services.

This government is committed to improving the quality of life of the people of Ontario. The legislation that is before us today would provide support to families when

they need it most. It would strengthen the working relationship between employers and employees, making the workplace more productive. And it would provide comfort to people in their last days of life.

This is what government should do. This legislation is good for those in need, good for families, good for employees and good for businesses. This legislation is the right thing to do for the people of Ontario.

1400

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'd like to respond to the statement that has just been made by the Minister of Labour.

First, I would like to point out that the promise was to help parents and others. It didn't seem to restrict it to what it is being restricted to in this new act that's being introduced today. We learn in this new act, which I will acknowledge is a good first step, that individuals are going to be allowed to take time off to support their family. However, we learn now that in the plan that's been put forward by the minister, it only applies in cases of family members who are critically ill, or, stated another way, an individual who has a serious medical condition, with a significant risk of death occurring within a period of 26 weeks or such shorter period as may be prescribed.

It does not apply to other caregivers who obviously wish to be with family members during times of crisis, crises which will not result in death but obviously times when people are seriously ill. In that respect, I think the government has not fulfilled their promise to provide family medical leave for families and individuals who are going through that difficult period of providing care for loved ones who are ill. So this bill is going partway.

This bill also does not provide these individuals who are going to take time off with the support and resources they require during this period. I would remind the Speaker that in our 2003 budget, we proposed improved tax support for people with disabilities and for family caregivers. We know that people who look after individuals with disabilities, and caregivers, have additional costs. We also know that the Ontario tax system already recognizes their reduced ability to pay taxes through several non-refundable tax credits for people with disabilities and individuals caring for disabled or infirm family members.

Three enhancements were proposed to these credits which would have become effective January 1, 2003. First of all, our budget proposed to increase the underlying amounts for the disability credit, the caregiver credit, the infirm dependant credit and the disability credit supplement for children with severe disabilities to \$6,637. Second, our budget proposed to expand the caregiver credit and the infirm dependant credit to include spouses or common-law partners who are dependent by reason of a mental or physical infirmity, and to provide support to more caregivers living apart from dependent relatives. Third, our budget proposed that both the caregiver credit and the infirm dependant credit be reduced when the dependant's net income reaches

\$13,000. Currently, the caregiver credit is eliminated at a different level.

Taken together, all of these improvements to support those individuals who are looking after people with disabilities, and the family caregivers, would have provided an estimated \$50 million in benefits to about 165,000 people in Ontario. This bill, although it does allow people to take some time off—again, it's limited to eight weeks even though the individual who is critically ill and dying may live beyond that time period—doesn't go far enough. There is no support here for parents of autistic children who are caregivers. There's no support here for parents of severely disabled children who have special needs. There is no support here to support the developmentally disabled. What about family caregivers who need to look after parents during times of serious illness? They're not allowed to take time off. They can only take time off if the parents are dying.

Again, this bill is one step forward, but certainly this government needs to do far more for Ontarians than this bill proposes. Our people in this province deserve more than what is in this bill.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I've read the bill. The New Democrats are eager to participate in the debate on second reading and eager to see the bill go to committee. We're particularly eager to see the bill analyzed from the point of view of thousands and thousands of Ontarians out there who find themselves in tragic but real-life situations and who, as a result of today's announcement, may believe they have some respite as a result of this legislation, should it pass.

But some things jump out, and some things cry out for immediate commentary. One, of course, is the observation, already made, that this applies to family members of a person whose health practitioner certifies is at significant risk of death. I suppose one would expect any family member to have some freedom from the demands of their workplace to attend to and with a family member who is in the final weeks or days. But one has to be able to afford to do it. You see, one can only avail themselves of a leave of absence if their economic situation makes that financially possible.

I'm thinking of a woman I know—I know her because I see her from time to time. She works as a chambermaid in Niagara Falls hotels during the day, and in the evening she works at another hotel where she's a server in the dining room. She works 16 hours a day at two different jobs. I don't know of any tragic situation involving her family members, but should one happen she would be hard pressed to afford to take even a week's leave of absence, never mind two, three, four or five.

I'm thinking of the single mom I've talked about before. I see her often because she works at the gas bar, and I see her as well because she also works at the Avondale—two different locations. Again, she's working at two jobs and raising her kids. Should one of those kids fall deathly ill, God forbid, this legislation would be of no value to her, because financially it would be im-

possible for her to forfeit even one week's pay, never mind eight.

I note that this is leave in addition to leaves that are granted under section 50, under somewhat different circumstances, but I also note that this legislation speaks to a crisis in our community, in our province and in our society about the adequacy of health care.

I, like perhaps so many of you, recall travelling to various places in the world over the last 10, 15 or 20 years. I recall my initial shock in Third World countries at seeing families literally camped out at the hospital with their family members—you know, moms or grandmothers setting up little cooking stoves, and family members being there to cook and prepare food for their family and remove dressings and clean them. I found that shocking. Yet as I visit hospitals and other health care places, just like you, I find that increasingly happening in this country.

One of the biggest single issues in our constituency offices for over eight years now has been the increasing inadequacy of home care support. It does little good to tell a family member, "You have a right to leave your job for one, two, three, four or five weeks," when the real issue is the inadequacy of home care. The real issue is the chronic and ongoing understaffing of nursing and, quite frankly, of all health professionals in our hospitals that makes it mandatory that family members—if a family member is going to receive an adequate level of health care, it's imperative that family members be there participating in it.

The bill is going to get an honest hearing and a legitimate, active and enthusiastic participation in the debate of it by New Democrats. But we're also going to ask this Legislature to consider what questions the bill legitimately asks. Those questions are about the inadequacy of health services and of health care as it exists right now: the lack of investment, the lack of real response by this government to Romanow, the chronic and ongoing understaffing and underfunding of home care, and the inadequacy of wages for so many people out there that makes it impossible for them to take advantage of leaves of absence because it's financially, monetarily, impossible for them to do that.

1410

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition): To the Premier, do you support and agree with the musings of your Minister of Health and your Minister of Finance that meals under \$4 should be taxed in the province of Ontario?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I can tell you that we are working as hard as we possibly can on a number of fronts with respect to how we're going to address the substantial

deficit left to us by the previous government. In addition to that, we have some very real concerns about rising health care costs, which have been rising dramatically during the course of the past several years, approaching 8%, 9% and 10%. We have a real concern about childhood obesity. And again, as I said, we have a concern about the deficit. So we feel a responsibility to speak to a variety of issues and to consider a number of possibilities.

Mr Eves: I take it from the Premier's rather lengthy response that he does support the musings of his Minister of Health and his Minister of Finance.

Do you not understand that you are talking about raising a tax, putting a tax on meals under \$4 on the most vulnerable in our society, on modest-income earners, those on social assistance and low-income seniors? Yet you seem to be determined to do it. Why?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I appreciate the Leader of the Opposition's desire to stand up for the vulnerable in Ontario, but where was he when he stood as the Minister of Finance on this side of the House and cut welfare rates by 22%? I am proud to say that in our short time in office, we have already raised the minimum wage, we have established a rent bank for those who are finding difficulty making rent payments, and we have begun to invest, for the first time in eight and a half years, in affordable housing. He cannot stand and be seen to lecture us when it comes to standing up for the vulnerable in Ontario.

Mr Eves: The Premier neglects to mention a few small, little subjects, like the fact that when you went through with your little plan to exempt those people, to raise the minimum wage, you forgot to exempt them from the Ontario tax reduction benefit. So you're giving on one hand and your Minister of Finance is taking away even more money than you gave them on the other hand. It's a shell game. You are hurting the most vulnerable people in society. You are taxing them more.

We completely removed over 800,000 people, the most modest-income Ontarians, from the tax rolls in the province. We'll wait and see what you do during your term of office.

To the Premier, are you telling us today that you are going to again break your taxpayer protection promise of September 11 last year that "I, Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, promise that if my party is elected as the next government, I will not raise taxes or implement any new taxes without the explicit consent of Ontario voters"?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I assume the Leader of the Opposition is asking me about a piece of legislation which he, in government, contravened; I assume that's the one that they're talking about, just so we're very clear.

Let me say that we are working very diligently to put together a progressive, balanced budget that will achieve, as its end result, to demonstrate our competence when it comes to managing the fiscal issues of the day, that demonstrates we are compassionate when it comes to

looking out for our most vulnerable and, finally, that clearly demonstrates we have a hopeful plan that will set this government on the right course, that will bring us continuing and sustained prosperity, that we will live within our means, that we will make ever-growing investments in health care and education, and the people of Ontario will see real, measurable results at the end of our first term.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question. The member for Whitby-Ajax.

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): My question is for the Premier. You promised to hold the line on taxes, and now you're not satisfied with going after the dollars of the people of Ontario but you want to go after the loonies and toonies of the people of Ontario.

The people of Ontario already pay an extraordinary level of taxes. On your own estimates they're paying \$18.6 billion this year in personal income tax and \$14.6 billion this year in retail sales tax, and you're going to take more from them. On your own estimates, in a few years you're going to go up to \$23 billion more than that in income tax and more than \$17 billion in retail sales tax.

You promised to hold the line on taxes, and now you're on a spending spree in Ontario. Now you want to take money from seniors and students. We know that 84% of the cafeteria sales in our schools are meals under \$4. Premier, will you confirm that there will not be a soup-and-sandwich tax on the people of Ontario to satisfy your apparently insatiable appetite for taxation?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Let me thank the member opposite for the question, because it gives me an opportunity to distinguish us on this side of the House and the approach we bring when it comes to providing good government to the people of Ontario, and those on the other side of the House. I will not apologize for the revenues we receive from the people of Ontario. What we intend to do, rather than denigrate government day in and day out and castigate our public servants, is make the case for government day in and day out and deliver quality for the money we're receiving from the people of Ontario.

Mr Flaherty: We know you love government, and we know you love spending. You've increased spending in this province by at least \$2.4 billion in less than six months, and that's why you have to tax as much as you are. That's why personal income tax is where it is, that's why retail sales tax is where it is and that's why now you even go after meals costing \$4 or less in the province of Ontario. You've gone on a spending spree, and now you're going after the poorest: the students, the seniors, the people who eat in coffee shops in Ontario. What steps have you taken—you're the government—to control spending in Ontario during your six months?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I am delighted to be able to speak to this matter. Let me begin a lengthy list with only three particular items: In the first case, we are moving to get rid of expensive consultants who were hired by the previous government so that we can get value for the

people of Ontario. We have introduced a law—to our knowledge the first of its kind in North America, if not the world—that will ban the use of taxpayer dollars on partisan, political advertising. Finally, we're going directly to the motherlode—I'm talking about OPG and Hydro One. We're going to bring transparency and sunlight into those contracts, so the people of Ontario understand that we're bringing to them, for the first time in a long time, accountable government.

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Mr Flaherty: You promised that you would balance the budget. You promised that you would hold the line on taxes. Instead, you've increased spending by more than \$2 billion in less than six months.

Now, just so the people of Ontario can know what to expect from your big-taxing, big-spending government, will you produce the report? You asked the public service in Ontario to produce a report on the cost of each one of your 231 promises. Will you produce the report so that when the people of Ontario are sitting in their coffee shop trying to choke down a coffee and a soup and a sandwich, they can see what your plans are going to cost them as they go out year after year after year? Will you produce the report so that people can see it?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Speaking of meals, I'm sure that struggling Ontarians find this defence of their cause by this party all too much to stomach. For eight and a half years, they failed to stand up for those Ontarians who are struggling day in and day out to get ahead.

I am proud to say that our platform was reviewed, supported and endorsed by a variety of economic experts. We put those numbers out for the people of Ontario to see during the course of the election. We were upfront with them when it came to our financial plans. What they terribly regret is the fact that this former government was not upfront with them when it came to the situation of our finances in the province of Ontario. We intend to continue bringing transparency and honesty to the management of the people's finances.

The Speaker: Member from Kenora-Rainy River.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. I want to ask why he's going after the lowest-income Ontarians. Whether it's increasing hydro rates, skyrocketing auto insurance premiums or property taxes that are going through the roof, your government is picking the pockets of ordinary Ontarians.

Now your government says that you need to tax meals that cost under \$4. Premier, 95% of all the meals sold in our hospital cafeterias are for under \$4; 86% of the meals sold in our colleges, our schools and our universities are for under \$4. Why are you hiking a tax that will hit the lowest-income people the hardest?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I want to say to the leader of the NDP that I'm not about to speculate on what may or may not be in the budget, but I'm very pleased to take the opportunity to talk about some of the things we are doing for our most vulnerable in a very short period of time.

As I said just a few moments ago, we have increased the minimum wage. We have established a rent bank.

We've established an emergency fund to help those vulnerable people who may have difficulty with the new responsible hydro-pricing regime. We have frozen tuition in the province of Ontario for two years. My understanding is that tuition went up by some 53% under the NDP government. We are standing up for vulnerable people in the province of Ontario.

Mr Hampton: I did not hear a denial, so let me try again. We're not talking about junk food and we're not talking about expensive meals. We're talking about the basic meals that a lot of people across Ontario try to exist on: soup and a sandwich, milk and a sandwich. Now your Minister of Finance says, "Oh, we're going to tax that."

Individuals with incomes of \$100,000 a year got a 35% tax reduction from the former government, but I don't see you going after them; I don't see you talking about even restoring some of that tax. Instead, what I hear is that you're going to hike taxes that affect the lowest-income people. If it's not true, then stand in your place and categorically tell us now that you are not going to hike a tax on meals that cost less than \$4.

Hon Mr McGuinty: Again, I'm not going to speculate as to whether or not a particular provision is going to be found within the budget.

But I can say, generally speaking, as a characteristic of our budget, it will reflect our values as Liberals. It will reflect the fact that we are committed to Ontario's most vulnerable. It will reflect the fact that we are dedicating ourselves to ensuring that those people who find themselves up against it get every opportunity that they need to succeed in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Hampton: Premier, where is your sense of fairness? Here is the reality: auto insurance premiums up 20%; for many people, hydro rates up 20%; transit fees in many places are going up; property taxes are going up; and now, you say, an 8% tax on the most basic meal that people could buy. At the same time, you promised that you were going to end the clawback of the national child tax benefit, which would restore at least \$1,400 a year to the incomes of poor families with children, but you're not. You're going to hike the taxes, and you're not going to end the clawback.

Where is your sense of fairness here? Where is your sense of what's reasonable for the lowest-income people in Ontario?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Again, if we want to compare and contrast, the NDP government raised tuition fees by 53%; we're freezing them for two years. Hydro rates went up some 40% under the NDP government; we understand some of the difficulties involved with raising hydro rates, and that's why we've created an emergency fund to help our most vulnerable. I think that speaks volumes about the difference between the approach that we're bringing to assisting Ontario's most vulnerable and the approach brought by my friends in the NDP.

Mr Hampton: There are 390,000 children in this province living in poverty. Sue Cox of the Daily Bread Food Bank says thousands of families would not have to

use the food bank if the clawback of the national child tax benefit were rescinded—in other words, if you gave that money to the families who need it. The only promise you seem to be keen on keeping, though, is your promise to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. You need to remember your promise to children.

Will you do two things: end the clawback of the national child benefit and state categorically that you're not going to tax the meals of the lowest-income people in the province? Here's your chance. Say it and do it.

Hon Mr McGuinty: Now I know I'm in government. The Conservatives are accusing me of breaking the Taxpayer Protection Act and the NDP are accusing me of not being prepared to break the Taxpayer Protection Act.

I appreciate the advice. I will take it as constructive advice offered by the leader of the NDP with respect to the benefits available for Ontario children growing up in poverty and his concern about the price of low-cost meals. I will carefully consider that advice as we put together our budget. I can assure you that this budget will, through its details, reflect our concern for and our desire to help Ontario's most vulnerable citizens.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Premier: Your government has floated a plan to increase retail sales tax from 0% to 8% on meals under \$4. In your opinion, is that a tax increase?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I know the Minister of Finance would like to speak to this.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I just want to make it clear to the members of the House that today is the first day of the campaign of the Ontario Restaurant Association talking about a tax on meals under \$4. I met with the restaurant association and representatives from McDonald's and Tim Hortons. They advised me of the campaign. They were concerned that such a tax would have an impact on the profitability of their businesses. I just want to say to my friend from Erie-Lincoln that it would be entirely inappropriate to comment on any measure that might or might not appear in the budget when it's presented later on in the spring-time.

1430

Mr Hudak: That was just a straight question: whether this would constitute a tax increase or not.

In today's Toronto Sun, in an article entitled "GTA survey finds Premier McGuinty floundering at the bottom of the pile in public approval," they report that in fact a mere 25% of those surveyed approved of that leadership. Let me make a suggestion: Your inability to answer a simple yes-or-no question, if that constitutes a tax increase, may be one of the reasons why you're at 25% in the polls. Let me also suggest that you are at 25% in the polls, Mr Premier, because you consistently break your campaign promises.

The Premier was in TV ads, spending millions of dollars, saying to Ontarians, "I will not increase your taxes." Since coming to office, he has said repeatedly, "I will not raise your taxes." He is the leader of the Liberal

Party; he can say no. Why don't you just say no to this new tax increase, or are you getting ready to take on Pinocchio in a nose-growing contest?

Hon Mr Sorbara: Mr Speaker, I'm not recommending to you that you make the venerable Pinocchio something that is out of order in this House, notwithstanding the remarks of my friend from Erie-Lincoln. I just want to say to him, and I want to make it very clear, that a week ago I was advised that this campaign by the Ontario Restaurant Association would be mounted today. I'm impressed that every single member of the opposition has got on that bandwagon and related their lead questions to that campaign.

I, as Minister of Finance, have said absolutely nothing about the possibility of taxing meals under \$4. I would note that in Canada we are one of only three provinces that does not tax meals under \$4. The taxation regimes around Canada are as varied as the landscape itself. I simply want to repeat, no matter how many times they ask the question, that we are not prepared to make budget announcements before budget day.

FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): My question is for the Minister of Labour, the Honourable Chris Bentley. In today's society, many people find themselves in a position where they are not only caring for young children but also for aging parents. This puts incredible stress on the working people caught in the middle. In addition to holding down a job and building a career and a future for their families, many people want to be there in order to care for gravely ill family members near the end of their lives. Minister, my question is this: What is the government of Ontario doing to help families care for dying family members and to alleviate the stress the situation puts on families?

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): The member for Etobicoke North raises a very important point, and a timely one. Many years ago, we as a society decided to be with people during the happy times, with maternity and parental leave. Today, with the introduction of amendments to the Employment Standards Act, we made a decision as a government to ask this House to be with people at the difficult times of life, at the end of life. With the bill, if passed, we are going to provide up to eight weeks of unpaid but job-protected leave so that family members can be with a gravely ill dependant or parent—an extremely important, significant social advance which recognizes the very points raised so appropriately by the member for Etobicoke North.

Mr Qaadri: Minister, will this initiative present certain cost issues for business? For example, I assume that small employers would have a difficult time coping with the absence of an employee. Are small businesses also expected to provide job-protected leave for employees?

Hon Mr Bentley: Once again, this legislation is the right thing to do, and responsible businesses recognize

that. The costs to businesses from absences and caregiver stress have been estimated to be upwards of \$1 billion in direct costs and almost \$2 billion in indirect costs. Businesses understand costs associated with the need for workers to give care.

This legislation will in fact benefit business in the long term, because it enables employers and employees to better manage, to recognize the cost. It will ensure that the 40% of workers who are forced to quit their jobs because of the stresses of providing care will not be lost to businesses. Businesses will not lose their work, they'll not lose their skills, they'll not lose their knowledge, they'll not lose their experience. In fact, this legislation will help businesses.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I have a question for the Premier. Last week, Ontarians were shocked to learn that Canada's confessed first family of terrorism, the Khadr, received unprecedented assistance from the federal government to return to Ontario.

While we appreciate that these matters generally lie within federal jurisdiction, the Ontario government used to take an active role in suggesting reforms and improvements to promote domestic security within Ontario. We made submissions on federal anti-terrorism and immigration legislation, offered tangible operational policy improvements, fought for federal funds for emergency management and advanced a security perimeter strategy that promoted both enhanced security and cross-border trade.

Since last October, Ontario's voice in these matters has gone silent. We know Ottawa is reviewing immigration enforcement, conducting a national policy review, designing a new border services agency and reviewing a scathing Auditor General's report on their failed security efforts since 9/11.

My question to the Premier: Can he give us a specific example of any participation by Ontario in these ongoing subjects? Has your government made any submissions on any of these subjects on behalf of the people of Ontario, or are you content to simply let Ottawa do as it wants?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I know the minister would like to speak to this.

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): The member should know—and I'm surprised he doesn't—that I have met with my federal counterpart. I did that very soon after she became the minister responsible in this area. I went to Ottawa and met with her, had lengthy discussions—my officials did. I have visited Albany, New York; I have visited Lansing, Michigan; I have visited Columbus, Ohio. I have met with the homeland security people there. I have met with state police officers, discussing how we can coordinate our activities.

If you don't think that's enough, we have continuing discussions with them. Not only that, but we have made a

recent appointment at the ministry, where we've changed the status of Dr Young so that he is now responsible for emergency response items. I am delighted with what we are doing.

Mr Runciman: That was a non-response with respect to the question, but we're getting used to that.

In all sincerity, I'm urging the minister to get involved. He has actually disbanded the security council of Ontario. We ask him to get a handle on these matters, because they are critically important to the people of this province. What he's really doing is playing an ineffectual role.

Interjections.

Mr Runciman: Mr Speaker, I'm trying to ask a question.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

Mr Runciman: Something more straightforward and immediate: Can the minister indicate whether he plans to write to his Liberal counterparts in Ottawa to express his views on the return of the Khadr family to Ontario and whether he thinks the Citizenship Act needs to be amended to create the capacity to revoke acquired citizenship when it can be shown that the persons in question have used it to further interests harmful to Canadian national interests, such as supporting al-Qaeda and raising monies for it? Can the minister confirm that he will take action, or does he disagree with that idea?

Hon Mr Kwinter: I find it interesting that the former minister should talk about his security advisers. These were ad hoc appointments to deal with you as a public relations item. They did not meet for a single year. These are people who were supposed to be advising you. They did not convene for a year prior to the change of government. Not only that, but I have met with my federal counterparts and we are now dealing with these issues.

1440

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): My question is to the minister responsible for seniors. Like many other members of the Legislature—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. Could I get some order, please. It looks like these long holidays have had a negative impact on how we behave today.

The member from Thunder Bay-Superior North.

Mr Gravelle: My question is to the minister responsible for seniors. Like many other members of the Legislature, a growing number of my constituents are families of seniors with Alzheimer disease and related dementias. It is my understanding that Ontario's strategy for Alzheimer disease is now in its fifth and final year. Could you tell the House what steps are being taken to sustain the benefits of this strategy?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): Thanks to the member for this very important question. It is indeed a tragedy that over 130,000 individuals in the

province of Ontario, most of them seniors, suffer from Alzheimer's and that that number is expected to rise over the next 10 years to over 200,000. That's why it's so important for a strategy like this to have taken place over the last five years.

The strategy has resulted in expanded respite services, in the hiring of 50 new psychogeriatric resource consultants across the province, and public education coordinators for each of the 39 local Alzheimer Society chapters. Training initiatives have helped educate front-line staff to better serve the people with Alzheimer's disease and their families, and that's just the beginning. We must beat Alzheimer's, and only a collective action by government can make it happen.

Mr Gravelle: As you will know, Minister, I have a very close relationship with the Alzheimer Society in my riding of Thunder Bay-Superior North. They, along with other chapters in the province, have worked very hard on developing the province's five-year strategy, which, as you point out, is now wrapping up. Can we assure the Thunder Bay chapter, as well as the many other partners in the province, that they will play a significant role in the development of our government's follow-up to the provincial strategy? Certainly I presume we'll want to take advantage of their expertise in this vital area.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: Last week, the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat, together with the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, held a think tank here in Toronto which brought together a hundred professionals—academics, researchers, caregivers and service providers—to help individuals and their caregivers deal with the effects of Alzheimer's disease. As a matter of fact, this coming week, on April 16 and 17, the Alzheimer strategy invitational workshop will take place, which in effect will help celebrate the success over the last five years and also generate new suggestions as to how to deal with this tremendously threatening disease in the province of Ontario in the future.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Premier. You announced money for the apprenticeship enhancement fund today. Can you tell me, are you spending less or more money on this fund than the previous government?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I was very pleased and proud to make an announcement this morning on behalf of the government which provides in excess of \$18 million to our apprenticeship programs. It speaks to a number of different initiatives within that, including providing more funding for equipment within our colleges and funding for pre-apprenticeship programs, which, as I discovered, are absolutely essential if we're going to get more young people to develop a keen interest in going into an apprenticeship program. So we are proud and pleased to have participated with an announcement this morning at Centennial College, and we look forward to doing much more in the days to come.

Mr Marchese: Premier, I do have the numbers that I can share with you. I'll just offer them to you. The Conservatives spent \$10.3 million in 2003. They budgeted \$10 million for 2004—it's all here—and today you announced \$9 million for this fund. Not only did you not announce new money today; you are cutting over \$1 million from an existing grant. Explain to me why you are masquerading this cut as a funding increase.

Hon Mr McGuinty: Again—we need to provide more details with respect to this particular announcement this morning—it was nearly \$18 million in Ontario's apprenticeship training programs. That included \$3.6 million in the pre-apprenticeship training program. Students can use this program to strengthen their skills to be eligible for apprenticeship in a skilled trade. We're investing \$5 million in the apprenticeship innovation fund to provide our training delivery agencies with the resources to update and develop new training materials. And finally, and I think this is what the member was referring to, we're making a \$9-million investment in the apprenticeship enhancement fund, helping colleges to update their training facilities and allowing them to train more apprentices to industry standards. We understand that if we're going to compete in this highly competitive knowledge-based economy, the best way for us to do that is by investing in the skills of our workers, and that's what this announcement is all about.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Premier. I'd like to refer to a letter that I'm sure many members of the Legislature received. It comes from the president of the Toronto Association of Law Libraries and reads as follows: "Over the past few months, a worrying trend on government Web sites has alarmed the law library community. Access to many documents such as press releases and government background papers has disappeared from ministry Web sites as new government ministers overhaul" their "department Web sites." She challenges you in this letter to ensure that these documents removed are in fact reinstated. Can you tell me why you and your ministers would be removing important government information from the Web sites?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm sure the Chair of Management Board would like to speak to this.

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): In terms of ensuring that the public get the information they're entitled to, as the Premier just said, among other things we've introduced the advertising piece of legislation. In this particular case, I think ministries will be ensuring that their Web sites reflect the up-to-date information that the public deserves. I think that's what you probably will find on the Web sites.

Mr Klees: With respect, this is very serious. There is a very specific action on the part of government, of government ministries, to remove specific information that relates to press releases and background papers; they

have been removed. I spoke to the president of the Toronto Association of Law Libraries this morning. I asked if she had heard from the government with regard to her appeal. She said no, but that she had spoken with the privacy commissioner, who has also expressed serious concern about the government's action in this regard, and indicated that she's looking into it. I'd like to know from the minister, why was this information removed, and will you now, today, commit to the House that whatever has been removed will in fact be replaced on these government Web sites?

Hon Mr Phillips: What I'll undertake to do is make certain that any information the public is entitled to that should be on the Web sites is there.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Phillips: The member is saying they've been removed. Any information that should be on government Web sites to inform the public properly, I'll undertake to ensure that that takes place. It's consistent with everything the Premier has done since elected: to ensure that we are a government that is accountable and transparent, and the information the public is entitled to, they'll get. The information that the previous government chose to disseminate through paid partisan advertising won't be done. If indeed there is information that should be available to the public, that should be on our Web sites, I'll make sure that in fact that takes place.

1450

PUBLIC HEALTH

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): My question is for the Minister of Health. As you know, the federal government has proposed a new national public health agency in its latest budget. Many cities in the country are now submitting bids to house this new agency.

I understand that Ontario has taken a different approach. I understand that we have submitted a proposal that would take advantage of the talent pool in many cities across Canada. Can you tell me, please, more about the proposal, and why do you think Ontario's proposal is the best choice for the new public health agency?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm pleased to say in response to the member from Hamilton West that the position the Ontario government takes is a position in support of the view of Dr David Naylor, the esteemed dean of medicine at the University of Toronto who prepared a report for the federal government that proposed this agency and further proposed that the agency build on the strengths across our great country.

So the approach that the province of Ontario has supported is one that builds on strengths here in Ontario and also other strengths that can be brought from the various regions. We believe that all hands on deck is absolutely the best way to proceed when we're talking about public health emergencies and therefore that Ontarians will benefit not only from the extraordinary capacities that we have at home in our great province but

from those capacities which exist in other parts of our country as well.

Ms Marsales: As a very proud Hamiltonian, I know we have a plethora of exceptional talent and could offer a good case for making Hamilton the major centre. Why is making Toronto the major centre for the agency good for Toronto and its regions?

Hon Mr Smitherman: In response to the honourable member, I say that what we've done, with respect to this proposal, is build on the extraordinary strengths that exist here in the city of Toronto and add to those these enormous capacities that are present and emerging at McMaster. I was incredibly impressed, at a recent visit to McMaster, to see that they dedicated fully \$10 million of the enormous gift from Mr DeGroot to their infectious disease and public health capacity. Further, given the reality of human and animal interaction around disease, we really felt that those extraordinary capacities that exist at Guelph were an enormous piece of what we call our public health powerhouse: that these three communities, Toronto, Guelph and Hamilton, working together, provide the very best benefit to the country.

With respect to Toronto's role, I do think it's incredibly important, and it's some advice that we've given the federal government as well, that all decision-makers be aligned in the same geographic setting, so that in a time of crisis or emergency all of the decision-makers are close at hand. That's why Toronto's leadership role and connection to the largest public health agency in the country at Toronto and the Ministry of Health and the government of Ontario is critically important.

TAXATION

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is for the Premier. Yesterday and today, we had the opportunity to hear from the people at the food banks in the province of Ontario. They are extremely concerned about your plans to add a tax to meals under \$4. They've told us this is a regressive tax that is going to detrimentally affect welfare mothers and their children, low-income seniors and the working poor. It's a tax that's going to be imposed upon people who have no means to improve their own financial situation. I ask you, why do you want to tax and hurt those low-income people, who are least able to afford to put food on the table for themselves and for their children?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The minister would like to speak to this.

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I'm very happy to address this House and tell the people of Ontario that for the first time in a very long time we have a government that's prepared to look at the most vulnerable people in Ontario and come to them as partners to help, not like the last government, which in the last 10 years actually cut welfare rates by 22%, which, as this member knows, affected more women and their children than any other group in the country.

Let me say this to the member opposite: We've had the opportunity, in these very short few months that we've been the government, to come forward with some significant change in attitude, which is very important, but as well with additional programs that are meant to help. When the government makes policy changes, we understand that we have to think of our most vulnerable first.

Mrs Witmer: This government has had six months to help the most vulnerable, and this is an issue that they need to deal with. I just want to tell the member, it's not we who are saying this is a regressive tax. These are people from the food bank. In fact, in speaking to the Toronto Daily Bread Food Bank, they are telling us that this tax on meals under \$4 is going to significantly impact the number of people who live in rooming houses without cooking facilities and who rely on small restaurants that provide affordable meals for them and their families. So I say to the minister, when are you going to stand up in your place and tell your Premier that you will not allow this tax to go forward?

Hon Ms Papatello: I just cannot stand the irony of this. Here is a group of people who sat as government and their first order of business was to cut the nutritional allowance for pregnant women on welfare. And we said, "Shame on you for doing that." This particular member was also at the time deputy leader of a government who cut welfare by 22%. Here is a group of people who sat as government and didn't build a single affordable housing unit in this province, who delisted rent control in this province.

Here we have a McGuinty government which is consistent in a short few months: an energy fund for emergencies, a rent bank to prevent homelessness in the first place, and a budget coming out that finally will speak to the most vulnerable in this province. Let me say to the member opposite, in a very short few months we will have done more for the most vulnerable people than the government has seen in the last decade, and I am determined to do that, along with the Premier of Ontario.

TREE INFESTATION

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Invasive insect species such as the Asian long-horned beetle and the emerald ash borer have become a huge issue in this province. Closer to home, the two-lined chestnut borer, which is a native species, has had an impact in the town of Oakville. How are we fighting the spread of these invasive species, Mr Minister?

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): I'd like to thank the member from Oakville. I certainly regret that the Oakville area has now also been susceptible to a tree infestation, the likes of which the member has referred to, and that we've had two other infestations in the province of Ontario that were first discovered last year in Toronto and Vaughan, with the Asian long-horned beetle attacking hardwoods there and the emerald ash borer in the Chatham-Kent area.

As the member knows and is now witnessing in his own area, the bitter medicine to basically fight these infestations, because there are no effective or approved pesticides, is the radical surgery of cutting down trees in the way of these insects. That's what's happening in Oakville. I'm very pleased, contrary to some reports, that the MNR helped the city forester in Oakville bring in the experts from the US forest service to determine what was the best course of action.

Mr Flynn: This certainly is an urgent problem for the whole province. Whole towns and woodlots have seen certain species of trees already entirely removed. Homeowners and woodlot owners in Chatham-Kent, north Toronto and Vaughan have been devastated because their trees are being cut down. Even in my own community there are reports of a large number of trees that will be felled or have been felled in Oakville. Can you advise if the town of Oakville is able to access the tree replacement fund recently announced by your ministry?

Hon Mr Ramsay: As the member knows, the federal government basically had ordered the taking down of trees, both in north Toronto and Vaughan, and also in the Chatham-Kent area. It is most devastating news to be received by homeowners or the public lands of our municipalities. I had announced about two months ago a \$1-million basic kick-start to a tree fund to start replacing those trees. I would certainly encourage Trees Canada and other organizations to start to contribute to that, because I think we can raise a lot of money. As far as I'm concerned, the Oakville cut can be included in that fund.

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LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Premier: During the last election, you claimed that things were going to be different. You claimed that you were going to bring workers and management together. Well, workers at Casino Windsor have been on strike since April 3. They want to go back to work, but management refuses to meet with them.

Your House leader, the member from Windsor-St Clair, told the Windsor Star that there's nothing he can do. But, gosh, he's only the House leader. You're the Premier. Will you keep your promise? All you've got to do is get on the phone and tell the management at Casino Windsor to get back to the table. Being the Premier carries that kind of clout. You know that all it takes is the will on your part to pick up the phone, call the management at Casino Windsor and tell them to resume negotiations, to get back to the table. Will you do that?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I know the member is not suggesting that we somehow involve ourselves in the collective bargaining process and interfere. But I'll take this opportunity to express to parties on both sides our desire that they work together in their general interest.

I can tell you, this is more than just a matter of passing interest to us. We are losing significant revenues on a

daily basis as long as this strike goes on. So it is in our interest, just as it is in the interest of parties on both sides, that they come to the table, work together and resolve this matter at the soonest possible opportunity.

Mr Kormos: You see, Premier, the nexus between this government, as with the last two governments, and the casinos is somewhat more intimate than, let's say, the connection between this government and, oh, a private corporation that's somehow listed on the stock exchange.

You're right. The government's losing money every day. These casinos generate nearly \$100 million a year in revenue for this government. The workers who are on strike want to see those profits go to health care and education. They want to get back to work. They want to end the strike. Those workers and their leadership are eager to get back to the negotiating table.

You have incredible influence, make no mistake about it, on the management at Casino Windsor. All it will take is a phone call. Will you do that? Will you get on the phone and tell Casino Windsor to get back to the negotiating table, so that this strike can end?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I will not involve our government in any way, shape or form in what might be perceived to be interference in the resolution of this matter. But I can say this to the member opposite: We have mediation services that are available. If there is anything at all that we can do to work with both sides, bring them together and bridge the gap, we would be only too pleased to do so.

REPORTING OF GUNSHOT WOUNDS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Last December, you told reporters that the McGuinty government was preparing legislation that would compel hospitals to report gun wounds to police. With the rash of gun-related crimes we have seen over the last few weeks, when can we expect to see your legislation come before this House?

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): The member will know that most Ontarians feel that it's important that when someone who has been wounded, either by gunshot or knife, turns up at a hospital, the police should be aware of it. I think that's something that most people will support. You should know, and I'm sure you do, that under Bill 31, schedule A, it actually provides that medical practitioners may inform police when they feel that it would be appropriate.

So we agree that it's an issue we have to address. Bill 31 makes provision that it may be done. The big issue is whether it can be mandatory. Notwithstanding what some members may think, there are human rights implications, there are privacy implications, and we are looking into how we can get the stakeholders together so we can address this. That's where we stand on it.

Mr Dunlop: Recently, the chief of Canada's largest police service, Julian Fantino, called on the government to introduce legislation forcing hospitals to alert police

about gunshot wounds. As well, the Ontario Medical Association has already endorsed mandatory reporting of the names and addresses of gunshot victims. Forty-eight of 50 US states have mandatory reporting as well.

The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police considers mandatory reporting to be one of its priorities. Citizens in the province agree with you. They already think, though, that reporting of gunshot wounds is mandatory. Isn't it time that you introduced legislation, almost on an immediate basis, to support our police and keep our communities safer? We need the legislation now. We believe you should keep the promise you made to reporters in December and introduce the legislation immediately.

Hon Mr Kwinter: I started my answer to the first question by saying I certainly support the idea of reporting gunshot wounds. The problem we have—I have talked to Chief Fantino and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police about it, and I am meeting with the Ontario Medical Association this Friday to discuss this very issue—is that if we're going to do it, we have to do it right. There is no sense bringing in legislation that will not withstand a charter challenge and that will not withstand criticism under privacy legislation. It is something we have to do right. I am meeting with the stakeholders to make sure we get it done and that we get it right.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. With growth and prosperity in the GTA has come a growing population, and population growth brings increased traffic. More and more people are commuting from the 905 region into Toronto for work and other activities. To maintain the competitiveness of the region and keep our economy strong, we must keep traffic moving. What action has your ministry taken to combat GTA congestion and improve the efficiency of the GTA transportation network?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): It is absolutely true that we have about 100,000 people moving into this area every year, and in 20 years we will have maybe another two million people. That will create really serious problems in this area, and that is why we are committed to having a region-wide approach that will address the long-term needs of this region. We are committed to having legislation introduced about the Greater Toronto Transit Authority, which will address the long-term needs. In the short term, we have introduced high-occupancy vehicle lanes and implemented yield-to-bus legislation, and we are also improving highways like the 400 series to address some of these needs.

Mr Delaney: One way to ease traffic congestion is to encourage people to leave their cars at home and take public transit. An increase in the use of public transit has the added benefit of improving our air quality by cutting down harmful vehicle emissions. To accomplish this, we must improve public transit by making it more efficient and more accessible. Minister, what efforts is the government making to ease gridlock by promoting public transit?

Hon Mr Takhar: I couldn't agree more with the statement he made. I think it's absolutely essential that we need to encourage public transit in the GTA. First, we will need to make sure that people can move from one place to another in an efficient and timely manner. We are committed to providing sustainable funding for transit needs and have already announced \$1.05 billion, along with our federal and municipal partners. We have also given money to the TTC and are committed to improving GO Transit service and increasing parking at GO Transit stations.

1510

BORDER SECURITY

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I am going back to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services because we didn't get an answer from him regarding the Khadr family coming into Canada to access the Ontario health care system. This is a family that has publicly professed support for the Al-Qaeda terrorism organization and supported the September 11 attacks on the United States.

I asked the minister a very clear question earlier which I think Ontarians have a right to have answered. We see that trade hinges on border security—we saw that article on the weekend—and I will go back to the minister with the question: whether he thinks the Citizenship Act needs to be amended to create the capacity to revoke acquired citizenship where it can be shown that the persons in question have used it to further interests harmful to Canadian national interests, such as supporting Al-Qaeda and raising money for it. Do you agree with that? If you do, will you do something about it instead of warming a chair over there?

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I find it somewhat comical that that minister is telling this minister about warming a chair.

I'm sure the minister will understand that this issue is a federal matter. It's a matter that is being dealt with—

Mr Runciman: Abdicate the file; that's your response.

Hon Mr Kwinter: It's all right for you to tell me that it's my responsibility, but why don't you—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Kwinter: You should know that this is a federal responsibility, and I have every confidence that they will deal with it.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present a petition from seniors, including Millie Willick

and Bev Smith and Gord Smith from Stevensville, Ontario, that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, during the election campaign, the Dalton McGuinty Liberals said they would improve the Ontario drug benefit program but now are considering delisting drugs and imposing higher user fees; and

"Whereas the Liberal government has increased costs to seniors by taking away the seniors' property tax rebate and increased the price of hydro;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should keep their campaign promise to improve the Ontario drug benefit program and abandon their plan to delist drugs or increase seniors' drug fees."

In support, I affix my signature.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition which is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the parliamentary tradition in Ontario of presenting annual budgets in the House of the Legislative Assembly has existed for decades; and

"Whereas the previous government, in 2003, showed disrespect for our public institutions and the people of Ontario by presenting a budget inside a private, for-profit auto parts factory; and

"Whereas the previous Speaker of the Legislative Assembly condemned the actions of his own party's government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to uphold parliamentary tradition and hold a public presentation and debate of the 2004 budget, and every budget thereafter, by our publicly elected members of Parliament inside the legislative chamber."

I have signed my name with it, and I agree with it.

TAXATION

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have a petition, entitled "Stay the Course on Small Business Tax Relief," which is particularly important given the Ontario government is now considering scrapping the retail sales tax exemption on meals under \$4.

"Whereas business tax cuts have helped fuel the strongest economic and job growth ever seen in Canada;

"Whereas corporate income taxes on the smaller businesses that create most of our new jobs have been scheduled to be reduced to 5% in 2004 and 4% in 2005;

"Whereas the corporate income tax rate for manufacturing and processing firms has been scheduled to be cut to 10% for 2004, 9% for 2005 and 8% for 2006;

"Whereas the general corporate income tax rate has been scheduled to be 11% for 2004, 9.5% for 2005 and 8% for 2006; and

"Whereas the capital tax on employers is on the road to be cut by 10% in 2004, with the plan to scrap it entirely;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario stay the course and maintain the scheduled tax reductions for job-creating businesses."

I affix my signature to this.

ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS AND TRADES

Mr Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): "Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefits of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the profession, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their own country of origin; and

"Whereas Ontario, its business, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with bodies regulating access to Ontario professionals, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry or re-entry of skilled workers and professionals trained outside of Canada into the Canadian workforce."

I'm pleased to attach my signature to this petition.

TILLSONBURG DISTRICT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition signed by a great number of residents in my riding and the surrounding ridings.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital has asked for ministerial consent to make capital changes to its facility to accommodate the placement of a satellite dialysis unit; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has already given approval for the unit and committed operational dollars to it; and

"Whereas the community has already raised the funds for the equipment needed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care give his final approval of the capital request change from the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital immediately, so those who are in need of these life-sustaining dialysis services can receive them locally, thereby enjoying a better quality of life without further delay."

I affix my signature to this petition.

TUITION

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition signed by a few hundred students from the Canadian Federation of Students. I'm delighted to tell you that this government has listened to the Canadian Federation of Students and has frozen tuition fees already, but if I don't read this petition I will be remiss in my duties. Therefore, I must still read it.

"Whereas average tuition fees in Ontario are the second-highest in Canada; and

"Whereas average undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have more than doubled in the past 10 years; and

"Whereas tuition fees for deregulated programs have, in certain cases, doubled and even tripled; and

"Whereas Statistics Canada has documented a link between increasing tuition fees and diminishing access to post-secondary education; and

"Whereas four other provincial governments have taken a role by freezing and reducing tuition fees;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) Freeze tuition fees for all programs at their current levels; and

"(2) Take steps to reduce the tuition fees of all graduate programs and professional programs for which tuition fees have been deregulated since 1998."

Since I have agreed, and since the government has already done so, I thank you very much for accepting this petition.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): This petition continues to grow in popularity. I'm over 2,800 signatures.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government was elected after promising in their election platform that they were committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors but are now considering delisting drugs and imposing user fees on seniors; and

"Whereas prescription drugs are not covered under the Canada Health Act unless dispensed in a hospital; and

"Whereas the federal Liberal government refuses to acknowledge this as a necessary health service despite the Romanow report's strong support for a national drug program;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately and unequivocally commit to end plans for the delisting of drugs for coverage under the Ontario drug benefit program;

"To immediately commit to ending plans to implement higher user fees for seniors and to improve the Ontario drug benefit plan so the seniors can obtain necessary medications; and

"To instruct Premier Dalton McGuinty to demand more health care funding from Ottawa instead of demanding more funding directly from seniors."

This has my signature and full support.

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LANDFILL

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I present this petition on behalf of my constituents of Simcoe-Grey and also my colleague Garfield Dunlop from Simcoe North.

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on source water protection which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented by Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of Site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I agree with the petition and I've signed it.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Member from Durham.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): The riding is Durham, just plain Durham, and the member's name is O'Toole.

"To of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas recreational trailers kept at parks and campgrounds in Ontario are being assessed by the Municipal Property Assessment Corp (MPAC) and they are subject to property taxes; and

"Whereas owners of these trailers are seasonal and occasional residents who contribute to the local tourism economy without requiring significant municipal services; and

"Whereas the added burden of this taxation will make it impossible for many families of modest income to afford their holiday sites at parks and campgrounds;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That these seasonal trailers not be subject to retroactive taxation for the year 2003 and that the tax not be imposed in 2004 and that no such tax be introduced without consultation with owners of the trailers, trailer parks, municipal governments, business, the tourism sector and other stakeholders."

I'm pleased to sign this in support of my constituents from the riding of Durham.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you, to the member from Durham.

SEWAGE SLUDGE

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I think you're doing pretty well there, Mr Speaker.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the residents Wasaga Beach, wish to bring forth our concerns regarding the transfer of approximately 5,700 tonnes of 14-year-old sludge, which contains metals from the North Simcoe transfer station, to our recently closed landfill site. To date, there are no EBR requirements for hauled sewage.

"Due to this and the geography of the Wasaga Beach site being so close to the longest freshwater beach in the world and other sensitive areas, there exists a threat to the environment and the public's health. The questionable product should be moved to a desolate location. Once damaged, the environment and people cannot be replaced;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: To stop the sludge from being transferred to Wasaga Beach."

I quite happily sign that petition.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): Again, I have petitions from Joan Faria of Hamilton. She's done an incredible job. It's a very simple petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To immediately commit to action and funding to ensure the rights and protection for our senior citizens living in nursing homes and retirement homes in Ontario."

It has my signature of support as well.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling) The member from Durham.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I appreciate that. I will try to read quickly and briefly here.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in Ontario adopted adults are denied a right available to all non-adoptees; that is, the unrestricted right to identifying information concerning their family of origin; and

"Whereas Canada has ratified standards of civil and human rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;

"Whereas these rights are denied to persons affected by the secrecy provisions in the adoption sections of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas research in other jurisdictions has demonstrated that disclosure does not cause harm, that access to such information is beneficial to adult adoptees, adoptive parents and birth parents, and that birth parents rarely requested or were promised anonymity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to enact revision of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts to:

"Permit adult adoptees unrestricted access to full personal identifying birth information;

"Permit birth parents, grandparents and siblings access to the adopted person's amended birth certificate when the adopted person reaches age 18;

"Permit adoptive parents unrestricted access to identifying birth information of their minor children;

"Allow adopted persons and birth relatives to file a contact veto restricting contact by the searching party; and

"Replace mandatory reunion counselling with optional counselling."

I'm pleased to support this on behalf of my constituent Julie Jordan.

LCBO OUTLET

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I have a petition for an LCBO agency store in the village of Baxter.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the LCBO agency store program is intended to revitalize our small towns and villages and to provide

rural consumers with responsible and convenient access to LCBO services,

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make available to the village of Baxter an LCBO agency store."

I agree with this petition and have signed it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

COMMITMENT TO THE FUTURE OF MEDICARE ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR L'ENGAGEMENT D'ASSURER L'AVENIR DE L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 6, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 8, An Act to establish the Ontario Health Quality Council, to enact new legislation concerning health service accessibility and repeal the Health Care Accessibility Act, to provide for accountability in the health service sector, and to amend the Health Insurance Act / *Projet de loi 8, Loi créant le Conseil ontarien de la qualité des services de santé, édictant une nouvelle loi relative à l'accessibilité aux services de santé et abrogeant la Loi sur l'accessibilité aux services de santé, prévoyant l'imputabilité du secteur des services de santé et modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé.*

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): We will continue the debate. It's the member from Simcoe-Grey.

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I'm pleased to rise and speak about Bill 8, which is the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act.

I sat in on committee hearings in Sudbury, Ottawa and Toronto here just a few weeks ago, and I want to tell you that as a former health minister—I served as health minister from 1995 to 1997, for about two and a half years—this legislation actually makes me look pretty mild compared to the draconian approach the new health minister, Mr Smitherman, is taking.

I've asked the government to withdraw the bill on several occasions, and I see now they've at least agreed to go back out to the public before third reading to see if anybody out there agrees with them. Hospitals, volunteer board members of all of our hospitals—I've got Markdale hospital, which is Grey Bruce Health Services, Stevenson Memorial Hospital in Alliston and Collingwood General and Marine Hospital. Certainly I can't name one volunteer who serves on those hospital boards, nor the senior staff of the hospitals, nor the CEO of each of those hospitals—none of those people agree with this legislation. Not one of them, that I'm aware of, supports the legislation, and I've had a lot of letters and e-mails with respect to this legislation.

The big problem is that, yes, governments in the past—and I remember I was the first health minister

under Mike Harris's government to have to order the takeover, as you'd say in layman's language, of a hospital board. I can remember Grand River Hospital, where my brother died. It was so bad there during the weeks I visited that I took over the board and sent people in. It couldn't have been worse. By the way, when the chaplain first saw me after making the announcement, she said, "Thank God," because the former board had taken away chaplaincy services that don't even cost any money. It's coffee and doughnuts and a room for all faiths to gather when a family—and particularly in the case of my brother, who died at 38 years of age of cancer, going through the palliative care stage.

The government of Ontario always had the ability to move in on governance in hospitals, but corresponding rights were also accorded under current legislation, which Bill 8 would amend, that says the government can only do that in the public interest. Bill 8 removes the key words "in the public interest" from hospital legislation and allows the minister to impose his or her will—in this case, his will—on any hospital regardless of what the local volunteer board members might say, regardless of what the chief executive officer might say and regardless of what the community might say. And by the way, the community owns these hospitals.

1530

We have over 100 corporations in Ontario. The community owns those hospitals. People in the local community can buy a membership—in some cases it's \$2; in some cases it's \$10. That hospital is a private hospital; all hospitals in Ontario are. They're not owned by the government of Ontario; they're owned by the community. And those people who take up membership on a hospital board or as a member of the hospital corporation are entitled to vote at annual meetings. They own the hospital on behalf of their communities. All the Minister of Health can do is use financial levers and moral suasion to try to get a hospital to abide by provincial policy.

The words "in the public interest" always gave the Minister of Health a need to be cautious when looking at and thinking about moving in on hospital governance in a particular community. That community, the volunteer board members of that hospital, could, under current legislation, take the government to court. I guess my point is that you don't do it lightly. The Minister of Health can't move in unless there's a really serious concern about patient care or a really serious concern about how that particular hospital is being governed. A really serious concern about the finances of a hospital could be a good reason. But at the end of the day, the community, as I said, had the right to take you to court and object to arbitrary measures that the Minister of Health of the day might try to impose on a particular hospital. That right is being removed.

In the last campaign, I don't remember the Liberal Party talking about removing the rights of volunteer board members in hospitals. I just don't remember you talking about it, nor do I believe, as a former Minister of Health, that you need this legislation. It has nothing to do

with the future of medicare, other than your adding the word "accountability" to the Canada Health Act, and you can't do that because you don't have jurisdiction to add words to the Canada Health Act. If you don't like the Canada Health Act, talk to your federal cousins and ask them to add a sixth principle to the Canada Health Act called "accountability." Your legislation is null and void, basically, and I'm sure that someday there will be a court challenge to that part of Bill 8.

The other part of it, as I said, is that it's so draconian. As hospital administrator Paul Darby of the Collingwood General and Marine Hospital said to me, "Mr Smitherman looks to be more draconian than even you, Jim." Actually, I think I said that to Paul in jest and he said it back—I've actually heard that phrase from several people. As I said at the very beginning of my remarks, I was a fairly mild health minister compared to what Mr Smitherman is trying to do, and I did the greatest change in health care in modern history with health care restructuring and the commission, and also the big construction boom. In fact, we had a contract problem, getting hosed on some contracts, because there were only so many large construction firms in Ontario that could build all these health care facilities not only that we announced as government but that were already being built in the province—the largest health care construction boom in the history of the province since hospitals were incorporated over 150 years ago. No one can deny that. It's a fact of life.

I simply ask the government—I would withdraw the legislation and not embarrass yourselves. I thought your committee members—Monique Smith and others—tried to do a very good job of explaining this legislation a few weeks ago, when I was on the road with them for a few days in committee hearings. But I'm afraid those same members of the social development committee, of which I am a member, are going to hear the same thing over again from hospital boards, from all those community volunteers, from people like Bernie Grandmaître, a former Minister of Municipal Affairs. I couldn't believe it: I was sitting 10 feet away from him when he made a presentation on behalf of Ottawa Hospital and Montfort hospital and actually said he was ashamed to be a Liberal that day. He went on at great length to scold the government for some five or six minutes, which is at great length in committee hearings, to tell them that. He stopped short of tearing up his Liberal membership card, but he couldn't understand, particularly in the case of the Montfort. The Sisters of St Joseph—two great-aunts in my family were Sisters of St Joseph, now deceased—were very worried about French-language services, about maintaining a French-language hospital. The Sisters of St Joseph of course are very worried about being taken over, because they're predominantly a Catholic hospital, with a Roman Catholic ethos in their hospital, and they would like to keep that. They don't want some pagan or atheist minister of the day who doesn't believe in God, which will happen in this House. Society is changing; it will happen. But a government of the day that gets so politically correct may actually try—

Interjection.

Mr Wilson: It's exactly the submission from the Sisters of St Joseph.

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): Actually, it isn't at all.

Mr Wilson: It is. They talk about Catholic ethos. I have a 20-year history on this issue, believe me. I'm the one who had to go down to St Mike's after Ruth Grier messed it up, when they were \$69 million in debt, and talk to the sisters. The fact of the matter is, they would be worried that some Minister of Health would arbitrarily impose his or her will upon them. The law is so clear that almost anyone of any age who can read can figure it out for themselves.

So these volunteers, the chief executive officers of the hospitals, my local hospitals—Markdale, Alliston and Collingwood—are not making this up. They are very, very concerned about it. I don't see the need for this legislation. You have current legislation on the books that was refined when I introduced the health care restructuring act a few years ago, I guess in 1996. It was refined to make sure that both parties, the hospitals and the government, have rights. You are taking away the hospital's rights. You have not changed that bill. I can't emphasize it enough. I think you'll regret the day when a minister in secret cabinet meetings—

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Rue.

Mr Wilson: —rue the day. In the cabinet, the health minister, without informing the members, could very easily be ordering a hospital to do something it doesn't want to do. It will create a huge impact on your local communities and you'll wonder what happened. You'll wonder, what piece of legislation did we introduce to allow Mr Smitherman or his successors to be so draconian? You'll look back at this debate, you'll look back at Bill 8 and you'll regret that you ever voted in favour of it.

So just withdraw it. No one will notice. It will be a one-day wonder in the media. If you withdrew a bill, you probably would get credit in terms of maybe bringing up the Premier's popularity, which is lower, by the way, than Mike Harris's ever was. Mike was always over 50% in the eight years I served with him. Mr McGuinty could use his popularity coming up. Withdrawing Bill 8 would help the Liberal Party, would help the Premier with his popularity and would be the right thing to do for the province of Ontario.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): C'est intéressant d'écouter un membre conservateur dire à l'Assemblée que le gouvernement est draconien. Je pense que c'est carrément intéressant. Je me rappelle que le gouvernement conservateur, quand ils ont été élus en 1995, a introduit un morceau de législation qui s'appelait projet de loi omnibus 26. Ce projet de loi donnait au ministre de la Santé dans le temps, mon collègue, un pouvoir absolu de créer des commissions de restructuration dans le domaine de la santé et de restructurer les hôpitaux.

On regarde le fusionnement qui était fait par ce gouvernement sur la question des hôpitaux, où on a fusionné

beaucoup d'hôpitaux, un hôpital à l'autre, ensemble, avec le pouvoir donné ou accordé par la législation directement au ministre de la Santé. Je trouve cela très intéressant qu'un député conservateur, un ancien ministre de la Santé, a dit aujourd'hui, « Vous autres, vous êtes draconiens. » C'est pas mal difficile à prendre.

I also want to say that I agree with my colleague from Simcoe-Grey on one point: that the government would probably be doing the hospital sector and volunteers who are on the boards of hospitals a great service just to withdraw this legislation. The title purports to try to do something to enhance medicare in Ontario. The reality is that it doesn't do that. It actually goes in the direction of giving the minister additional powers to impose their view. Remember, you give that right to the minister. There may be a Liberal government at this point, but in the future you might be giving it to a government that will have the same rights. Do we really want to give the Legislature that kind of right when it comes to running our community hospitals? I say that withdrawing the bill would be the best thing to do.

1540

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I listened carefully to the comments of the member from Simcoe-Grey. In fact I believe he was the Minister of Health at one time, but I'm not positive about that; he may have been. I appreciated his comments, but I find the suggestion that we should withdraw this bill a pretty odd comment and a strange approach coming from a former minister, if you ask me. Frankly, I look at the things that were going on in the health care system when he was in government and what little was being done to deal with it.

We need to have accountability in this system, plain and simple. We need to find a way to get the institutions within the health care system to go along. The only way to do that is to ensure that there is some level of accountability in this system. The member knows full well, because he was the Minister of Health—in fact, as Minister of Health I'm sure he did this—that we have the ability, if we want, to walk into a hospital and replace the board with a supervisor, but that's not something we want to do. We want to have other tools to try to prod the system along, instead of walking in there in draconian fashion and taking over the hospitals ourselves.

We need to prod the system along. We need to get those lineups for procedures reduced. We need to improve primary care. We need to make sure that Ontarians are healthier. We need to make sure that we increase the number of nurses in the hospitals. We need to make sure there is greater accessibility to doctors. These are things we cannot accomplish by being soft on this issue. We have to have accountability. We're going to stand up and demand accountability within this system. We are going to get it and we're going to turn this health care system around, unlike the previous government.

Mr O'Toole: I would say quite the contrary: that the member from Simcoe-Grey should be listened to. In his time as minister there were enormous changes in health

care. The main failure in the partnership with the people of Ontario and indeed Canada was the federal government. I think we all know that.

This bill is no way to build bridges with one of the more important components of the health care delivery system, that is, our hospitals. I spoke last week on this bill and I have spoken with the member from Kitchener-Waterloo as well. The article in the *Metroland* on March 23, 2004, characterized this as “the failure for the future of health care.”

I am pleased to say that under pressure from former Minister of Health Wilson and former Minister of Health Elizabeth Witmer, the government has relented and decided to hold public hearings on Bill 8. I can tell you, if you hold public hearings—I did sit in on the clause-by-clause of the now version of Bill 8 and I didn't see one single amendment adopted from our health critic, the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, or the NDP critic, Ms Martel, from Nickel Belt—not one single amendment. It's quite conspicuous when all these people put all this effort into making presentations and there is not one single respectful amendment.

The point I am trying to make is I think the *Toronto Star* had it right. They said in their article, “Bill 8 will decide health care future.” It goes on to say that it's actually the demise of the health care future.

I have a lot of respect for the effort the former minister from Simcoe-Grey, Jim Wilson, put into rebuilding health care, from \$17.4 billion to almost \$29 billion when we were finished. Clearly there has to be accountability. This way isn't accountability; it's about taking complete, undemocratic control over the hospitals in Ontario.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I just want to say how much I agree with the member from Simcoe-Grey. It's amazing what happens when people get into opposition. They tend to agree a lot with each other. Then they get into government, by and large, and they change. It's a bit bizarre how that happens, but it does. Then they come back into opposition and they change again. It's extraordinary.

Some of the observations that the member from Simcoe-Grey made are quite appropriate and correct. He made reference to Bill 26, except I think he's got a little more fragile memory on this issue than we do, because Bill 26 was one of the most egregious examples of draconian powers that a minister could give unto himself. It's for that reason that the member from Simcoe-Grey said that someone criticized the Liberals for being worse than the Tories, and the example that individual wanted to use was Bill 26, because that's the bill we all make reference to as a way of showing how a government can forget so much and decide that, “In order to make changes, we need to give ourselves absolute power.” That's what Bill 8 is all about. It's for that reason that Bill 8 equals the effect of Bill 26; in fact, in most cases surpasses—surpasses—the effect of Bill 26. At least in this example, for Liberals to have attacked the Tories for being so egregious in their desire to have absolute power, that they should forget and then institute Bill 8—you get

members here standing up for their two minutes saying how great this bill is and what it will allow them to do, how it will allow them to improve medicare and so on, and they forget that Bill 8 is worse in its effect than Bill 26.

The Speaker: The member for Simcoe-Grey has two minutes in which to wrap up.

Mr Wilson: I just want to follow up what my NDP colleague has just said—absolutely right. This bill—I wish the media were here. I wish Richard Brennan and the gang were here, who criticized me on Bill 26. This bill goes far beyond Bill 26. Bill 26 set up the health care restructuring commission. You had full access to the courts. You didn't like any of the processes of that committee. In fact, that's how the French-language hospital in Ottawa won their appeal. There's no appeal now. One thing that the health care restructuring commission did was close Wellesley Hospital. It was, frankly, a rat-infested, filthy hospital. I agreed with their decision, even though it was their decision to take.

I wouldn't have had to do Bill 26, I wouldn't have had to do a health care restructuring commission, and you don't need any courts. Bill 8 says the minister can order the hospital closed by telling the local board to take a hike. So when people go on about all the rhetoric for Bill 26, Bill 26 contained some fundamental rights of justice for all parties as we restructured the system.

The Liberal government today—and my NDP colleague and others on this side are right: You don't even have to bother with a commission that took three years; you don't even have to bother with the courts; you simply order the hospital closed. If this bill passes, the minute after it passes and receives royal assent, any minister of the day can close a hospital on his or her own whim. You have no rights and the volunteer boards are gone and the CEO will become an employee of the Ministry of Health and the Minister of Health. Today, under current legislation, the CEO is an employee of the hospital and only the hospital and those volunteer board members who represent the community.

The system isn't so broken—in fact, they say the system is better today than it was a decade ago—that you have to take over boards, throw out the volunteers and, without any recourse to any rights, you could actually close hospitals or do whatever the heck you wanted in the system, and there's not a darn thing the people of Ontario will be able to do about it because you're taking away their access to the courts. Shame on you.

The Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Marchese: I just wanted to say that I had the pleasure—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: It's only 10 minutes. You've got to compact your speech in such a little time.

I want to say that I was in this committee for one day, replacing my colleague Shelley Martel from Nickel Belt, and I've got to say that during all of the deputations, all the members who came in front of that committee said they had a problem with Bill 8. Normally, you will have

bills coming before you and you'll find a couple of people saying, "This is great," and a couple of people saying, "This is bad." Normally, that's the kind of balance you get. Not for this bill. For Bill 8, they were all opposed to this bill.

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): Check out the amendments.

Mr Marchese: The amendments, contrary to what some of the Liberal folks are whispering in my little ear, don't fix it.

Here's what I have to say about the bill, because you see, if you criticize it, people will say, "Ah, it's the opposition. They're always critical, they always criticize, because that's their job."

So I make reference to a number of people who came before the committee who say the following.

Lawyer Michael Watts said this: "I want to focus on what I perceive to be two of the greatest dangers of part III of the bill as currently drafted, which are (1) the shift of control from voluntary boards to the minister, and (2) the resulting increased likelihood of arbitrary political interference in the governance and management of hospital operations."

1550

Here's the problem: Most of the members, because they are so new, don't realize the effect of such language and such a problem contained in such a bill. They simply think, "Oh, it's not that bad. George Smitherman just wouldn't do the things that other people attack him for. He just wouldn't do that." You see, when you're in government, you can do no wrong; you can only do good. Only the previous government was evil; the current government is good. So whatever you do as Liberals, automatically it has got to be good. Correct? Of course. That's the problem with the new members: They just don't see the inherent problems attached to the language of this bill. The old members, if they're in cabinet, just have to say, "Oh, yes, what are you going to do?" If they're not in cabinet, they're not going to say a word. That's basically the way it works.

But Michael Watts said that there are two problems: "the shift of control from voluntary boards to the minister," which is what this bill is all about—the CEOS will not be able to exercise the control they ought to have. The minister now has that control. But remember, good folks watching, because it's the Liberals in power, you don't have to worry, because they are good and the others previous to them were bad; you simply have to take Liberals at their word when they say that, and move on.

The second point, "the resulting increased likelihood of arbitrary political interference in the governance and management of hospital operations," doesn't seem to bother Liberals, but it bothers people like Michael Watts, who is an active lawyer in this field and was profoundly worried about the language contained in this bill. He wasn't the only one who had worries; most of the people who came in front of the committee expressed the same opposition.

The other person I cited on other occasions is the following. Here's what the Ontario College of Family

Physicians said, including Ms Janet Kasperski, the executive director of the Ontario College of Family Physicians. She speaks to many aspects of the bill, the preamble and other parts, because many of the members refer to this bill as, "Oh, God, doing so much good," or that it will do so much good. This is what this person has to say about your bill. "The preamble," she says, "gives lip service to primary health care, but the bill is silent on how primary health care will be strengthened." So what is the point of saying that primary health care will be strengthened if they don't talk about how that will happen, except saying that it will be? Saying it doesn't make it so.

She goes on: "We read Bill 8 with a heavy heart. This bill is aimed at provider accountabilities but is silent on government and public accountabilities." In other words, what this government is saying is, "We will make everyone else accountable except ourselves." Remember: If you're a Liberal, that's OK. Making the rest of the world accountable is OK because, naturally, what you're about to do is a good thing. Only those who are bad or the critics of it must be, obviously, not knowledgeable or must be an interest group or something, because they don't see it.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): It's going back to committee.

Mr Marchese: Going back where?

Mr Parsons: It's going back to committee.

Mr Marchese: Therefore, when you listen to experts in the field who tell you about Bill 8, you say, "Something has got to be wrong with this bill." It's not a question of listening to Marchese or some other person in our caucus, but of listening to the critics who have no vested interest except to serve the public interest. What you are saying is, the critics don't serve the public interest; only you do. Only you can make others accountable because it is right and just. The critics must be wrong and must be serving a special interest.

I've got to tell you that you've got to watch yourselves, because even friends of yours—and I want to repeat: Bernard Grandmaître was a friend of mine here when he was in opposition; a good man, a very decent man. It was so puzzling and interesting to hear him accuse you folks of some terrible things. Monsieur Bernard Grandmaître said that he was a former Liberal, and as a former Liberal cabinet minister from the David Peterson era, he said:

"As a Liberal, I have seen better days. This law, Bill 8, is not the product of the Liberal Party I know. In fact, it is a flagrant contradiction to some of the most basic principles that inspire and have always inspired my party. This bill is a serious breach of confidence and of democratic principles, and like Mr Lalonde, it's hard for me to believe this is being done by a Liberal government."

What he's saying is, he doesn't recognize you people. It's possible because, once you get into government, you change so much that people like Bernard say, "I don't know you any longer." But rather than Liberals admitting

that they have changed, they would prefer to say, "Oh, perhaps Bernard was confused," or perhaps he didn't quite understand you as clearly as he would have liked to, or perhaps some of you might say, "We talked to him and he's of a different view." Sorry, this is Bernard Grandmaître, former Liberal cabinet minister, coming before the committee, saying he doesn't recognize you, and doesn't recognize you through the actions of Bill 8.

You say in your bill, or the minister tried to say again and again, that there will be negotiated accountability agreements. We argue that nothing can be further from the truth. If you look at various parts of this bill, it's not true. On page 25 of the revised bill, it says the following:

"If the health resource provider and the minister do not enter into an accountability agreement within 60 days after the minister gave notice under subsection (1), the minister may direct the health resource provider to enter into an accountability agreement with the minister and with any other health resource provider on terms as the minister may determine, and the health resource provider shall enter into and shall comply with the accountability agreement."

That's why we say it's a draconian bill. The minister can, could, will, would have the power to say, "You'll do as I say." It's not negotiated.

Let me give you a second example. On page 27, subsection 21.1(4) reads as follows: "The minister shall consider any representations made under subsection (3) before making a decision to issue a compliance directive or an order under subsection 26(1)."

There's nothing here about negotiation. It's about draconian powers that the minister gives to himself, worse than Bill 26, then reviled by both Liberals and New Democrats. Bill 8 is now reviled by Tories and New Democrats, and everyone that came in front of the committee deputing against it. I say "reviled" because many of those members had strong, negative feelings against Bill 8.

Ms Smith: "Reviled" is a little strong.

Mr Marchese: "Reviled" is strong for many.

We oppose Bill 8. We will continue to oppose it as long as it takes.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): On October 2, 2003, the people of Ontario—12 million—chose change. If you do what you always did, you get what you always got. The previous government threw money at health care. Yes, they threw money. It ballooned, almost to \$27 billion.

Here is what 12 million people in Ontario were saying: "I'm waiting longer still to get my services in health care. I am waiting longer for cardiac care, for cancer care, for hip and knee replacements, because the previous government did not believe in building a health care system." Really, there was no system. The previous government just threw money at something they did not believe in.

This bill is needed to build a health care system. There are changes needed. Through this bill, here's what we're

talking about: We're putting hospitals on a sustainable financial footing. But that comes with accountability. We're creating a culture of accountability to improve outcomes, the outcomes that 12 million people told us they wanted.

They want to make sure they get their cancer care, that they get their diagnostics in a timely fashion. They want to make sure that they have access to primary care, that they have a family physician. They do not want to see ballooning budgets of 10% in hospitals. Do you know why? They know it's not sustainable. What they said was, "We want this Liberal government to fix the system, to create a system." That is what we are doing.

New emphasis has also been put on healthy living. The previous government got rid of 12,000 nurses. We believe nurses are the heart of this system, and we are behind building a system.

1600

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'd just like to join in the comments on Bill 8. I found it interesting to hear the member speak just a few minutes ago. It's regrettable that he doesn't have a history in this House. I had the opportunity over the weekend to meet with some nurses. If he'd had the same opportunity, he would have heard those individuals say they were appreciative of the system our government put in place. We actually introduced the focus on prevention, we introduced the heart health program, we introduced the Alzheimer's strategy, we introduced the healthy babies program, we introduced the preschool speech and hearing program—the list goes on and on. We actually recognized that we needed a system that began with prevention. We also introduced the primary care system.

Interestingly enough, I was with a nurse today who indicated to me how appreciative she was. She said, "Do you know the impact that you and your government had on nursing throughout all of Canada?" The steps that were taken in the province of Ontario are steps that have influenced the development of policy.

Let me talk about the system we put in place. The system began with prevention. It went into primary care and then, of course, we had the hospitals. It was our government that started investment in home care and long-term care. We created 20,000 new beds. We made investments in order that people could continue to have care in their homes as opposed to staying in long-term-care facilities or hospitals. We are very proud of the comprehensive system and the foundation we put in place, and I hope this government will do something to build on it.

Mr Bisson: I want to come back to the comments made by the member from Trinity-Spadina. I think he touched on one of the central elements of what our jobs here as legislators basically should be and what action this government and this Legislature should take vis-à-vis Bill 8. I well remember the Liberals prior to the campaign and during the campaign. They faulted the Conservatives for not consulting; when they did consult, they faulted them for not listening; and when they listened,

they faulted them for not taking action on the advice given by stakeholders.

The member from Trinity-Spadina raises a very good point; that is, virtually everybody who came to this committee to present on Bill 8 was opposed to Bill 8. I would take it that the government would keep its campaign commitment that "We Liberals will withdraw the bill because we see that the majority of Ontarians are opposed to this bill." After all, they did promise in the last election that they would consult, that they would listen and that they would take action on suggestions brought forward by the public.

Well, what better way? A legislative committee travelled the province extensively, and members of the communities affected by this bill had an opportunity to come and present. At the end of the day, they said they didn't like the bill.

I'm going to have an opportunity a little bit later to talk specifically about what parts of the bill—there's now a feud by the hospitals in the riding of Timmins-James Bay, and I assume it's not much different than the views espoused by many people across this province.

This bill does the opposite of what the government intends in the title of the bill. They call this a bill that enhances the medicare act, but when you really look at what this does, it takes the power that elected boards now have and moves it into the minister's office. At the end of the day, I don't think that's a good thing. It was Liberals, along with New Democrats, who criticized the former Tory regime when they did that to education by appointing supervisors. Why the Liberals would do that when it comes to health care is beyond me.

Mr Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the debate regarding Bill 8.

In the two minutes I have, let me just bring Bill 8 back to my riding. Unfortunately, I've had two situations—I have a number of hospitals in my riding—with families who contacted me regarding concerns about services at their hospital. I remember when the first person called me, and my comment was, "Well, I'm the MPP, but the hospital has its own organization, has its own set-up." The fellow said to me, "Well, your government funds them, and as the funder, they should be accountable to you if I'm not satisfied with the information that I'm getting or the lack of services." I think that hit home with me, when I realized that that's what Bill 8 is all about. If you're not satisfied, then there is an alternative, and in this case, it's the minister. It's sort of the last resort.

Subsequent to that, I had another family that called me with some concerns, and unfortunately, the patient has cancer and it was a very emotional situation. I spent time with her and the family. Again, it crossed my mind, "Well, why are you contacting me as your local MPP?" The response was, "Well, you fund them. If I'm not satisfied and I think there should be some other recourse, I'm going to the local member, whoever it is, because the government uses my tax dollars to fund the hospitals."

So what have I just said? I've said that Bill 8, if necessary, allows the minister that opportunity because

that's what the public perceives. They simply perceive that if they're not getting the service that they feel they're entitled to or something's gone awry in looking after a member of their family, they have initially their local MPP whom they'll contact and expect me or any other members to get involved, to participate, and try to help out. The last resort above that, if it has to go beyond that, is the minister. As he said, that's sort of the last resort.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): That concludes questions and comments. The member for Trinity-Spadina has two minutes to reply.

Mr Marchese: I thank friends—and foes as well—for their remarks. I just would remind the foes from Mississauga East and Niagara Centre—Niagara, somewhere there—of a couple of things.

Just to remind you, member from Mississauga East: When the Liberals were in opposition, they and us—we here and you there—we excoriated the Tories when they introduced Bill 26 for having the same kind of powers given to their minister as you're giving to yours in Bill 8. Excoriated. You say, "We're simply going to use the election of having 12 million people give us the power to do what we want." You're saying it was bad for the Tories to give themselves powers that were unwarranted and draconian, but it's not so bad for you. You're saying that's OK. You're saying that 12 million people are saying that it's OK if Bill 8 gives the minister extraordinary powers, because you got elected to introduce change—whatever that is.

We're telling you it's not OK, and what's not OK, member from Mississauga East, is to sound like the Tories. Your line about "Tories threw money at it" is usually a line that comes from the Tories. It doesn't surprise me, but maybe Liberals would be surprised for you to be saying that out loud in such a loud way, because you then sound like the Tories. New Democrats say you sound like them, but some of your constituents don't know that. So don't say that so out loud, because what you're saying is that Bill 8 gives your minister these extraordinary powers because you want to be able to make the changes you want because you want to be able to make the cuts you want, and whether CEOs or hospital boards agree with you is irrelevant. What you're saying is that Bill 8 will cut through all that, and you'll get the job done and you'll be able to get hip replacements faster. I'm telling you, it's not going to work.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

1610

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to enter into debate on Bill 8 on behalf of the people of Erie-Lincoln to express a very strong concern—that's probably an understatement, "strong concern"—and the very, very harsh comments we've heard from individuals and groups in the Niagara Peninsula. I had the chance to attend the hearings in Niagara Falls, among other places. I'm going to share with the House some of those comments, particularly from the Niagara Peninsula, what people—real people; not just politicians speaking or behalf of the government, but actual individuals—are saying about Bill 8.

I think it's important to look back on how this bill was born. How did this bill come into existence in the Legislature? What were the circumstances surrounding its entry on first reading? I think, to look back, we were in the middle of quite a public storm over a series of broken promises by Dalton McGuinty in his first few weeks in office—I guess not entirely unlike most of these six months in office, but at that point in time in particular there was a debate on P3s, the public-private partnerships, when very clearly during the election campaign the Liberals gave the implication, if not saying outright, they were going to tear up these agreements, that they were opposed to P3s. Lo and behold, the actual decision was to maintain the P3 hospitals in Brampton and the Premier's own area in Ottawa, and rightly so. Many groups raised up a significant protest over this obvious broken promise. However they like to package it, the only difference is that our P3s had a blue ribbon; theirs have a red ribbon. Otherwise, it's the same deal.

So in order to try to change the page from this scrutiny and this public upset over their broken promise on P3s, they rushed to the Legislature what became Bill 8. While Bill 8 contained significant amounts of rhetoric and platitudes about protecting the public aspect of the health care system, its contents entirely belied the kind of rhetoric that we heard.

You know the expression “You can't judge a book by its cover”? Well, certainly in these circumstances, you could not judge the bill by its preamble—much like the Liberal campaign document, where they said one thing during the campaign and now something completely different while in office.

So an absolutely staggering coalition of individuals from diverse points of view, whether it's doctors, nurses, hospital administrators, union leaders or volunteer boards, all came forward and protested Bill 8 in its original form. How often do you see that kind of coalition of groups with these different viewpoints criticizing a bill? The bill was poorly written, it was poorly thought-out and, I think, rushed into the Legislature after the P3 flip-flop to try to change the page. But it wasn't taken through the appropriate political tests before they put it out there publicly.

In fact, I think the only people who are pleased with this legislation are the printers, because of the scads and scads of legislative amendments that have had to take place to correct pretty well every page in this bill, save the title. So the printers may be very happy, but I don't know if that's the best way to create jobs in the province of Ontario, by having bills rewritten from stem to stern.

A couple of aspects that I want to address in my time include the health quality council and, again, some of the comments I've heard locally about this bill. The health quality council, no doubt, is a sheep in wolf's clothing. They make it out to be this powerful committee that is going to report to taxpayers across Ontario on the state of the system and then do something about improvements to the system, but when you see what the legislation actually says, it is a powerless committee. It won't have

any independence from government, and it will have very limited ability to criticize the government. Let's look at the details.

For example, every individual will be appointed by cabinet. That's strike one. Every member of that committee will be rubber-stamped and approved by cabinet, which I would argue will limit their ability, their latitude, to speak independently and be critical of the government of the day.

Secondly, despite a campaign promise and a promise, I think, in the minister's preamble, the council will not report directly to the people of Ontario. In fact, the council will report first back to the minister, and the minister will then deem what's appropriate to go forward into the public. They can also—

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): The cloak of secrecy.

Mr Hudak: The cloak of secrecy will descend on the health quality council. So they'll only report back publicly on issues that the minister gives them the green light to report back about. So much for direct and fulsome reporting.

Third, the council has absolutely no mandate whatsoever to reflect on how the government is managing the health care file. One analogy: It's going to sit quietly in its cage and wait for the minister to feed it by hand and teach it the catch phrases that the minister wants to hear. He may as well have bought himself a parrot to repeat back the minister's political catch phrases as what they're doing with the health quality council, which is significantly limited in its ability and certainly does not in any way resemble the way it's described in campaign promises or in the preamble. So again, it's a sheep in wolf's clothing.

With respect to other parts of the bill, they talk a lot about the accountability mechanisms and accountability agreements. I think we all agree that when we invest health care dollars, we want to maintain maximum accountability. There are ways of doing this through particular fiscal levers, depending on results across the system, or particular surgeries that you want to enhance. Competition, I think, as a Conservative, I always say, is an excellent way to ensure hospitals or other parts of the greater public sector improve their performance. There's no mention of that. Instead, what we have for accountability is a takeover of the volunteer boards in hospitals. Whether it's the Douglas Memorial Hospital in Fort Erie or the Haldimand War Memorial Hospital in Dunnville, their boards are effectively taken over by the Ministry of Health.

I'm not clear why members across the way are convinced that having the Ministry of Health, that leviathan, that behemoth of bureaucracy, run the hospitals is going to result in greater accountability. Speaker, you're a veteran, both on the government and the opposition side. You've seen how quickly—better put, how slowly—large bureaucracies like the Ministry of Health respond. In fact, probably a snail on Quaaludes going up a ramp would reach its destiny more quickly than this kind of

approval process through the Ministry of Health. So why they would have faith that the ministry bureaucracy will manage better accountability—I think, in fact, this witch's brew, this hybrid they put forward, will actually result in less accountability.

The same thing goes for agreements that hospitals may have with doctors or surgeons. Hospitals across this province will bring forward particular agreements to attract a doctor to an underserviced community like Port Colborne, to bring a specialist to the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital in Grimsby. Under this bill, they want to have all of those approved by the Ministry of Health. I don't think the doctor's going to wait around that long for the bureaucracy to pass it from desk to desk for approval at the minister's or deputy minister's desk. I think we're going to lose a lot of doctors and specialists as a result of that kind of initiative.

I agree with the hospitals in my area that strongly stand against these provisions that are going to manacle the administrators and the boards to the desk of the deputy minister or the Minister of Health. Maybe there's another motive here too. Hospitals can play an important role in offering constructive criticism or alerting the public to when the Ministry of Health or the government is failing the needs of hospitals. Maybe by having this reporting mechanism, by making sure that the CEO becomes a dual employee, both to the hospital and the Ministry of Health, it's their backdoor way of silencing their critics in the system, to again bring this shroud of secrecy over decisions. So I wonder if part of the thinking was to silence the role hospitals play in pointing out where a government's health care policy is inadequate.

Let's look at what the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital board had to say on February 26 at the public hearings in Niagara Falls. They said that the proposed amendments that are in the bill "do not go far enough," particularly when it comes to the ministry's role and the role and accountability of the executive director. They say that they have "no ability to negotiate and it's a bastardization of the term 'negotiation' and destroys faith, not only with us but our staff and ultimately our community as a whole."

Hospitals in Dunnville and West Haldimand have similar concerns. They say, "There should be no direct authority by the minister over our executive director if the minister is not directly accountable for all the actions of the hospital. This hybrid approach is harmful, it will not work, and you know it was harshly criticized in British Columbia," where it was the model.

Similar concerns were expressed by the St Catharines and District Labour Council. It says that this bill would "grant the ministry virtually unprecedented power to require individuals and organizations to comply with the health care initiatives," and they "could override collective agreements." That's just one of the many criticisms coming on Bill 8.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I suspect this will be the last chance I get to speak to this bill, at least

until it comes back for third reading. I'm not looking forward to third reading debate, because third reading debate isn't going to be any more joyful than second reading debate was. This bill's a dog. It's a mongrel, a three-legged mongrel. This dog should be put to rest. This dog should be put out of its misery because it's a sick three-legged mongrel that's a biter, quite frankly. You can't trust it around kids, you can't trust it around old people and you can't trust it around strangers. Put it out of its misery.

1620

I've just never seen a bill where nobody—nobody—who appeared in front of the committee supported it. As I've said before, these guys couldn't even come up with somebody's brother-in-law to show up under the guise of some fake organization, saying that they supported the bill; you know, like a ringer. They couldn't even come up with a ringer. They couldn't even come up with the president of a Liberal riding association to call themselves some sort of health care consultants. Nobody. Nothing. Zip. Zero. Nada. Not a one. It was just remarkable.

Look, at the end of the day, if you want real accountability, don't give Stalinist powers to your Minister of Health, to this government or, quite frankly, any subsequent government. Build democracy into the health care system. Adopt the proposition I made by way of a bill in the last Parliament, and I'll be proposing it again. Let's directly elect hospital boards. You want democracy? You want accountability? Directly elect hospital boards. The largest single expenditure of taxpayers' dollars is the health care system, the largest single expenditure of taxpayers' dollars locally in our hospitals. We elect school board trustees. Let's elect hospital board directors and members. That will build accountability. That will build democracy. That's the solution.

M^{me} Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): Je suis très fière de prendre quelques minutes pour donner mon appui au projet de loi 8. Ce projet va créer un Conseil ontarien de la qualité des services de santé. Ça va garantir l'accessibilité aux services de santé et va créer un système avec imputabilité. C'est un projet qui va mettre en place des modifications de la Loi sur l'assurance-santé.

Les valeurs de notre gouvernement et de la population ontarienne sont clairement établies dans le préambule, qui démontre clairement aussi la différence entre notre gouvernement et celui avant nous. Le préambule nous dit, « La population de l'Ontario et son gouvernement reconnaissent que l'assurance-santé—leur régime de services de santé publics—traduit des valeurs canadiennes fondamentales et qu'il est indispensable de la préserver pour la santé actuelle et future des Ontariens et des Ontariennes. »

Ce sont ces idéologies qui ont été mises en place après l'élection que l'on vient de passer. Aussi, les citoyens de ma communauté d'Etobicoke-Lakeshore et les citoyens à travers l'Ontario nous ont demandé de « souscrire à l'interdiction d'un système à deux vitesses, de la

surfacturation et des frais modérateurs, conformément à la Loi canadienne sur la santé. »

Nous, avec la population ontarienne, croyons « en l'imputabilité des pouvoirs publics comme moyen de démontrer que la gouvernance et la gestion du système de santé permettent » de favoriser l'intérêt public.

Entre autres, c'est pour toutes ces raisons que je suis très fière d'avoir la chance aujourd'hui de démontrer la différence entre notre gouvernement et celui qu'on vient de remplacer le 2 octobre. Merci beaucoup.

The Acting Speaker: Merci beaucoup. I'm pleased to recognize the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr Yakabuski: I want to compliment the member from Erie-Lincoln for his contribution to this debate. I also want to congratulate our health critic, Elizabeth Witmer, for being named an honorary nurse by the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario for her work when she was the Minister of Health.

I want to touch on one part of this bill that we haven't heard much about in this House. We've talked about what this does to hospitals and hospital boards, but I also want to talk about doctors who would prefer not to work within the confines of OHIP, those doctors who bill the patients directly and have those patients collect from the insurance, the provincial plan, individually. Those doctors are being outlawed by this bill. You know, I can't think of a more accountable doctor than the doctor who clearly shows his patients exactly what his or her professional services to them are costing the provincial treasury, doctors like Dr Robert Kidd in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, in the town of Renfrew. These people, many who have been physicians for some time, don't wish to change at this stage of their careers. They may leave the profession rather than be choked by this bill which will, again, create a further shortage of physicians in this province.

They talk about accountability being needed in the health care system. The doctor who is willing to bill the patients directly and have those people collect their refund from OHIP is the most accountable doctor. Those patients, I believe, understand better than anyone else what the cost of those services is to all of the taxpayers of this province. I don't think that's something this bill should be doing.

The Acting Speaker: There's time for one last question or comment.

Mr Bisson: I want to make the point yet again, because I think some of the government members missed what we've been trying to say here from the opposition. That is, virtually everybody who came before the Bill 8 committee was in opposition to this bill. It would seem to me that should ring off some alarm bells in the Liberal caucus to do something pretty drastic to be able to respond to the concerns of those people, those deputants who came before us to present. Somehow or other, I don't think the government quite understood the message, because I listened to the questions and comments that we just had, and here we are again, government

members getting up and saying, "Oh, gosh. Oh, gee. Such a good bill."

What this bill does is exactly what Liberals and New Democrats railed against when the Conservatives were in power. Let me remind you. The government of the day, the Conservative government, decided they wanted to take control of education. They were mad at school boards, because school boards, in their view, were being irresponsible, not a view that I and my caucus colleagues in the New Democratic Party shared, and certainly nobody in the Liberal caucus in opposition shared that view either.

So we in opposition—New Democrats and Liberals together—said to the Conservative government, "You can't take away the responsibility of duly elected boards over questions about how those school boards should operate. What you're basically doing by putting them under direction of supervisors is taking the control away from those elected people and putting the decision-making in the hands of the Minister of Education." We said that was wrong; Liberals said it was wrong.

Now we've got a Liberal government elected that seems to forget what they promised the people before and during the election, and that is not to wrestle power from the hands of duly elected boards. The problem with this bill is, you're taking the power from duly elected hospital boards—who are volunteers, I might add; they don't get paid to do this—and putting it in the hands of the Minister of Health. I say that's wrong. We should withdraw the bill. It is not a step in the right direction.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Erie-Lincoln has two minutes to reply.

Mr Hudak: I appreciate the comments by my various colleagues. I want to reinforce the two major points of my remarks. First, in rebuttal to the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, who read off the government's speaking notes about the health quality council: Let's be honest here. This board, this health quality council, is not independent. They're all going to be hand-picked by the staff in the Premier's office—no independence on this board.

Secondly, despite what they say, these people are not reporting directly to the public. They report to the Minister of Health, who then deems what goes into the public sphere. This notion that they're going to be reporting on the health care system is nonsense. They report to the health minister, who decides what moves forward.

Third, they cannot report on how the government is managing the health care file. They will report only on what the Minister of Health deems appropriate. They have no independent research or reporting ability.

This is clearly a wolf in sheep's clothing. The quality health council has no teeth. The quality health council is an empty vessel. The quality health council is a dog that don't hunt. The quality health council is all hat, no cattle. It is a parrot no more; it's an unparrot. The quality health council will not do as they say.

Secondly, I still have not heard a good answer as to the government's faith in how the Ministry of Health can

do a better job at running hospitals than our volunteer boards and our local administrators. As the member for Niagara Centre said, this is Stalinist planning. Maybe there's an old Gosplan plan out there. They can dust off and bring in some Brezhnev-era castaways who can implement this kind of massive health care planning over the backs of the local volunteers and local governance.

I have no faith. Let's let this dog lie. Let's move on and bring forward a brand new bill that can actually do something to improve the health care system, not this dead dog.

1630

Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bisson: I've got about 10 minutes to try to put on the record a couple of things that need to be said about this bill. Much of what we've been saying as New Democrats, and to a certain extent what the Conservatives have been saying, about this bill I don't want to repeat over the next 10 minutes. It's been said, and it's pretty apparent the government ain't listening at this point, that this bill wrestles the control of duly elected hospital boards away from those boards and puts it squarely in the hands of the Minister of Health. Quite frankly, that's something that I think is wrong-headed. We opposed it while we were in opposition. When the Tories tried to wrestle, and succeeded in wrestling, the decision-making for education out of the hands of elected school boards and put it in the hands of the Minister of Education, it was our critic, Rosario Marchese, and my leader, Howard Hampton, and the rest of the NDP caucus and, I would say, the Liberal caucus who bemoaned that, who fought against that, who campaigned against that.

What disappoints me: I thought we finally had an ally onside in the Liberals, when it comes to wrestling control from duly elected boards to the minister's office, but we now have a Liberal government that yet again has flip-flopped. While in opposition, they opposed taking the responsibility of things from duly elected boards into ministers' offices. They opposed it during the election. Now what are they doing by way of this bill? The same thing as the Tories. So, voted for change, but it seems to me that not a lot of change has happened on that particular point.

I want to put on the record a couple of things that were said by some people I represent in the riding of Timmins-James Bay. These are only two of the letters I've received and I wanted to put them on the record. In fact, I wish I had time to read them all here. Unfortunately, I've only got about eight minutes left and I'm not going to have enough time to even do these justice. First of all, these are letters that come from hospital boards within the riding of Timmins-James Bay. We have in our riding the hospital on Moose Factory Island that's run by the Mushkegowuk Cree of James Bay. It's a federally funded hospital, at this point, with some provincial funding. We're in the process of transferring that over to the province as negotiations unfold. There is a provincial hospital in Moosonee called James Bay General. We have another one in Hearst, l'Hôpital Notre-Dame. We

have the Sensenbrenner Hospital in Kapuskasing. We have the Smooth Rock Falls Hospital in Smooth Rock Falls and another hospital, Timmins and District Hospital, in Timmins.

All the hospital boards have told me the same thing. They said, "Gilles, we can't have this legislation passed, because they're taking power from the people who sit on our community boards for those hospitals and putting the decision ultimately in the hands of the minister. We can't support it." They've asked me to come here and put on the record some of the issues. They've asked to have this bill go back to committee. I will say—give the government credit on but one thing—they've accepted our arguments from the New Democratic caucus, the work that the health critic for the New Democratic caucus, Shelley Martel, did, along with the rest of us, who said that this bill has to go back to committee after second reading. It had gone out to committee after first reading. There was consultation. Virtually everybody was opposed to it. It's now here for debate.

We hope the Minister of Health is listening and that when we do go back to committee, if they don't withdraw the bill, they at least try to amend it to take away that repulsive idea of wrestling the final decision-making from hospital boards into the hands of the Minister of Health. I'll say that it is going back to committee. One of the things that all the hospitals have asked me is to try to get this bill back to committee. We were successful in that, and in the negotiations we had with the government House leader over the last two weeks we managed to get days in committee, as well as days in committee for amendments. At least we were able to do that.

I want to put this on the record from the James Bay General Hospital. I've got to say to people that James Bay General is one of the most unique hospitals in Ontario. It operates a physical location in communities in Attawapiskat and Fort Albany. Basically, they're like parts of a hospital wing out of Moosonee. They operate their administration and a clinic out of Moosonee. It's the only provincial hospital on the James Bay coast. They have a lot of challenges because they're having to serve people on James Bay, where there are no all-season roads. The only way to get patients out of there is by air ambulance. We fly in them down in the Sikorski helicopter when they've got to leave those communities to get services and fly them back by helicopter at quite an expense. It's the only way we can provide those services that are not readily available in the community. This hospital board has really done a lot of work to try to pioneer health care in the north. I've got to say this board has worked very hard, has taken the responsibility seriously. It's made up of 90% Mushkegowuk Cree people, who are sitting on the board. The chair is Stella Wesley, a First Nation member out of Fort Albany. They all take their responsibility seriously, and they asked me, "Can you get the government to back down on this one? We've been working hard as representatives of the community, when it comes to health care in our communities, and the government is trying to take that away from us."

I want to put on the record this letter, signed by Stella Wesley, chair of the board of directors of the James Bay General Hospital. It reads:

"The central problem with Bill 8 is that it gives Queen's Park the power to impose anything it likes on any individual hospital. The government can bypass hospital boards, the people who know the most about the hospital and the services it provides to the community.

"We strongly recommend that the bill be returned to the standing committee for public hearings following second reading for further amendments. Ontario hospitals would welcome the opportunity to work on additional changes that will allow us to move forward together. Our specific concerns are as follows."

On that point, we are going to committee. I want to tell Stella and the rest of the board of the James Bay General and others that we are, in fact, going to committee on that issue.

They say, "First, although a reference to negotiated accountability agreements has been included," and that's part of the amendments, "the legislation still permits these agreements to be imposed after a period of 60 days without referral to a third party dispute resolution mechanism." It's still basically the same thing: The minister has the right to do what he or she wants. "Throughout discussions between the Ontario Hospital Association, you," meaning the Minister of Health, "and your officials on suggested amendments to the bill, it has been made clear that the due process provisions are insufficient and that the bill must expressly provide for referral to dispute resolution, such as arbitration." They're saying that if you're not going to withdraw the bill, at least do what would make it a little bit less offensive.

"Second, the bill gives the minister extensive powers to issue a broad range of compliance directives and orders against the board—again without first referring the matter to third party dispute resolution or, at minimum, obtaining approval from cabinet." He can do it without even talking to cabinet, which I find bizarre. "Again, it has been made very clear that this is not acceptable to hospitals and the volunteer board members dedicating so much time and effort to their governance roles.

"Third, we cannot endorse provisions which give the government authority to issue orders directly against hospital leaders, thereby undermining the role of the board. We therefore believe that sections 26.1 and 27 should be deleted in their entirety." They're basically saying what we're saying: pull the bill back.

"Fourth, to ensure the communities continue to receive the services they need, the inclusion of 'accessibility' or 'timely access to care in the community' must be included within the definition of 'public interest.'" I think this is a really important point, because the bill says this is all about increasing and making better our medicare system in Ontario but there's no provisions in the bill for making that happen.

Imagine being a person in a community like Attawapiskat, Fort Albany or any of the other communities that are basically landlocked from any other place in

Ontario and you have a heart attack. You'd like to know there is provision in this bill that, at the end of the day, will put some services in your community to take good care of you should you need them. They're saying you've got to put that in the bill so there is some definition about what "timeliness" means when it comes to services.

"Fifth, we are very concerned that section 9 has been amended extensively to allow for a broad range of clinical payments by hospitals and other facilities to physicians, contrary to recommendations made by the OHA that these payments be made permissible only 'in a narrow range of circumstances.'"

That very much limits the ability of this hospital especially to fulfill its mandate when it comes to providing services. At the end of the day, health care costs money, and you've got to make sure they've got the bucks to provide services. I'm here to say that it does cost more to provide health care in a northern community like Attawapiskat or Fort Albany compared to Timmins, Iroquois Falls or Toronto. We need to recognize that in some way in our funding formulas, if not in the bill itself.

I want to say in the last few seconds I have that I have similar letters that I won't have a chance to put on the record from the Timmins and District Hospital, from the Kapuskasing-Hearst people and from Smooth Rock Falls, all saying basically the same thing: "The bill is flawed. Don't do what the Tories did. Don't centralize decision-making in the hands and in the office of the Minister of Health. You've got to leave that where it belongs, and that is in the hands of the people who are duly elected and who volunteer many hours on hospital boards to make sure that control lies within communities and not in the minister's office."

I just put this as a thought: Imagine, if you will, that those types of decisions are being made outside of your community by a minister in Toronto, and you're sitting somewhere in Timmins or Thunder Bay or Simcoe, how uncomfortable that makes one feel. I think that would be enough to make you change your mind.

1640

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): It is my pleasure to rise again in support of Bill 8. The taxpayers of Ontario now spend \$28 billion each year on health care. For most of the past decade, this figure has risen by about 10% each year, on the watches of the two opposition parties while they formed the government of Ontario between 1990 and 2003. If the taxpayers of Ontario have been spending 10% more each year, it is fair to ask if they have received health care service that is 10% better or 10% more accessible or 10% faster, year after year.

Taxpayers have spent lavishly on health care for more than a decade but lack the ability to know how well their money is invested. The Provincial Auditor can count how much, but he's not properly equipped to evaluate how effectively Ontarians' money is spent. That's why health quality councils will be so valuable. By collecting data that is clear and consistent across all Ontario hospitals

and is collected regularly, we will be able to make an informed judgment on how effectively Ontario health care institutions use the people, time and money allocated to them on an annual basis.

It is interesting that not one deputation before the justice and social policy committee came from an institution that said to us, "We're below par for institutions similar to ours." Everybody said they were among the best. But surely half of all Ontario health care providers are in the bottom half province-wide on an ongoing basis.

Bill 8, with its health quality councils, allows Ontarians to finally see how effectively health care providers use their resources. This measure of professionalism and accountability is long overdue and will be seen as an example of how this government faced up to a serious challenge and solved it for the best interests of all Ontarians.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to make a few comments this afternoon as well. I have to start right off the bat by saying we're almost at the end of debate here on the second reading of Bill 8, and of course we won't be supporting this piece of legislation in its current form. We do, however, want to compliment my critic, the former Minister of Health, who was instrumental in making sure that we do in fact have committee hearings on second reading, and I understand there are three days of clause-by-clause as well. That's my understanding right now. I think it's important that we get the stakeholders who are interested in this bill to come back and try to convince the government that this is a huge mistake.

It's interesting to note that the previous couple of speakers have talked about accountability. Every time we brought up the word "accountability" when we were in government, this group of people who are now on the other side of the House continually complained about it. They chastised us in many ways about accountability. It was never enough. It didn't matter how much money we spent; it was never enough.

But the problem we have here today, as I mentioned earlier in previous hits and in my comments before, is what we are doing to the volunteers in our health care system. That is the most important part of this bill that I am most confused about and against in most forms. Quite simply, it takes the life and heart out of hospital boards, foundations and auxiliaries. That's what we have here. That's what this bill is doing. You will never convince me that, in its present form, this bill is satisfactory to those people who are the heart of our health care system.

It has been a pleasure to speak here this afternoon. Again, I want to say we will be opposed to this bill and look forward to committee hearings and third reading debate.

Mr Marchese: I want to congratulate my friend from Timmins-James Bay for bringing us the perspective of the hospital board at James Bay General, because that perspective is no different than any other perspective we've heard from all the deputants who came from all over Ontario. It's the same thing over and over again in

terms of the lament of hospital boards saying that the minister is giving unto himself absolute powers that they consider to be a bad thing for boards, for CEOs, and yes, indeed, even accountability.

I remind the Liberals that when the Tories decided to use their centralist powers to centralize education financing, to attack teachers and to diminish them, to belittle them—unlike any other government had ever done before—to belittle the trustees, as they did over and over again, to amalgamate boards all over Ontario, the Liberals said that was wrong; that that would cause chaos in the system; that there would be no peace and there would be no positive change as a result of that. We said that, and I agreed with Gerard Kennedy, the now Minister of Education, who used to say how awful it was that Conservative governments would centralize power so strongly in their own hands, so centrally. That's what Bill 8 does. What we're saying to Gerard and others is, you're doing the same thing in health as the Tories did in education. You attacked them then, and we attack you now for doing the same thing.

You cannot bring about positive change by forcing hospital boards and CEOs to do your will. It won't happen in a way that is natural, in a way that is healthy. You're not going to get the change you need by doing what you're doing in Bill 8. It's wrong, and we're fighting it.

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I can understand why my friend the member from Erie-Lincoln thinks this is a bill about centralizing power in the Premier's office, because that's how his government operated. That's the way they operated for eight years.

I also have people who come to my office, and they say, "What happened to my health care system over the last 10 years? What happened to it?" A man was in my office a week ago and said, "My very old, frail mother had a broken pelvic bone." That's very painful. She was in the hallway of the hospital. There was no room for her. There was no bed for her. There was no one to help her to go to the bathroom. There was no one for him to complain to, except overworked nurses. So he came to me and complained to me, which makes perfect sense, because I am his duly elected representative and I can go to the Minister of Health and say, "Here is a problem."

Why shouldn't the Minister of Health have an accountability agreement, an understanding with all the hospital boards in this province that says, "These are our goals, and these are our demands"? The people who pay for this system, who pay through the nose for a system they are not happy with, would like to know that we're all on the same page; that we know this is what we want and this is how we're going to get it. It's perfectly reasonable.

Again, I can understand why there's some confusion because the province has operated for so long under a system where there was a centralized power, where the staff of the Premier's office was basically running the show, where everything came out of there. It was centralized. We are trying to change that, and we have

by changing the system. Every single Liberal MPP sits on a policy committee. We all have input on what's happening, and this bill has had the input of people all across this province. It has gone to consultation, like this government never did, and if it has to go back, it will go back, because we're committed to that kind of openness.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Timmins-James Bay has two minutes to reply.

Mr Bisson: I want to take my two minutes on the comments made by the member for Stoney Creek, because that's exactly the reason why we shouldn't be doing what you're doing by way of this legislation.

Let's be clear: If there are decisions to be made in a hospital somewhere in Ontario, who do citizens most trust and feel most confident will make the decision in a way that's conducive to the needs of the community? It's local hospital boards. I don't want the Minister of Health in Queen's Park in Toronto making a decision about what's going to happen in my local hospital, let's say, in Kingston, Sudbury, Thunder Bay or Moosonee, because at the end of the day, they're far away. Go to any of our ridings and ask most citizens who the Minister of Health is, and they wouldn't even be able to give a name, never mind try to influence a decision. I want the boards to make those decisions. We have other mechanisms by way of government to work with hospitals in order to advance whatever health policy we want to do. That's called funding. That's how you deal with this stuff.

Now, the member from Stoney Creek—I couldn't believe it—said, "Well, you know, that's why I got elected. I got elected so I can walk across the aisle and go talk to the Minister of Health about the concerns."

1650

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Good luck.

Mr Bisson: Good luck: exactly, like my good friend from Nickel Belt says. Can you imagine? There are many, many ministers of health who have sat on the other side who, quite frankly, didn't listen to their own cabinet, their own backbenchers, let alone the opposition. That's happened over the years.

And we want to put more power in the hands of the Minister of Health? We don't live in a totalitarian state here; we live in a democracy. At the end of the day, I want to know the decisions are being made the closest possible to where the decisions are going to affect the people, and that is by way of the hospital boards. So I've got to say again, do what the vast majority of people who came before this committee have said. After first reading, and we did hearings, virtually nobody agreed with this legislation. So I say, withdraw it. You would be doing Ontario a great service.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate on Bill 8?

Mr Bisson: Can I do it again?

The Acting Speaker: I'm afraid not. Further debate?

Mr Smitherman has moved second reading of Bill 8, an Act to establish the Ontario Health Quality Council, to enact new legislation concerning health service accessibility and repeal the Health Care Accessibility

Act, to provide for accountability in the health service sector, and to amend the Health Insurance Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

Order. I would like to inform the House I've received the appropriate documentation from the chief government whip, asking that the vote on the bill, the recorded vote, be deferred until tomorrow at the appropriate time when we have deferred votes.

Orders of the day.

GREENBELT PROTECTION ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION DE LA CEINTURE DE VERDURE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 6th, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 27, An Act to establish a greenbelt study area and to amend the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001 / Projet de loi 27, Loi établissant une zone d'étude de la ceinture de verdure et modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur la conservation de la moraine d'Oak Ridges.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): It's a doubleheader today. I come in on the next game—wooohoo—but this time on a different bill. That's the beauty of House duty, right? When you're on House duty, you get the opportunity to speak to bills.

I want to put a number of things on the record when it comes to the whole issue of this particular bill that we call the greenbelt legislation. I want to put on the record right up front that, generally, we're supportive of what the government is doing, as I think we can all accept.

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: What's the matter with you guys? You don't like the—

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: But—

Interjection: You're going to spoil it.

Mr Bisson: But I just want to put a couple of things on the record quickly up front. That is, generally, I think we can all agree in this House that we need to have a more sane planning process when it comes to development on sensitive lands such as the Oak Ridges moraine and other areas across this province. That's like motherhood and apple pie. Only the Tories would argue against apple pie and motherhood. Well, maybe not motherhood, but certainly apple pie. They only like the blueberry pie, but that's another story.

I think we can all agree on that one and, in jest with my good friends from the Conservative Party, I think even they probably agree with the principle.

I am a little bit concerned, however, not so much with what this government has done but with what the

previous government did. I sat on the committee, back between 1990 and 1995, that made all of the massive changes to the planning rules that we have in the province of Ontario—many of the very rules that this government, the Liberal government, is looking at trying to bring back by way of this bill and other future Planning Act amendment bills that will be brought back to the Legislature a little bit later.

I remember sitting on that particular committee, because it was quite an interesting committee to sit on as a new member back in 1990. Imagine that: I used to be a new member in this place, in 1990. I was about 40 to 60 pounds lighter, a little less grey and I had more hair, but let's not go there.

What we were trying to get at is that there's a huge problem in the province of Ontario, as there are in other provinces and jurisdictions out there, in the way that we approach planning. For example, one of the things that we have seen in our cities across North America, and I would argue in some places in Europe as well, is the whole issue of urban sprawl. What we've seen is, as communities are in a rush to develop because population bases get bigger, for all kinds of reasons—either economic activity, immigration or just overall population growth within existing populations—there's very bad planning when it comes to how we develop our cities.

If we look at the city of Toronto over the last 30 years, we have seen a huge amount of urban sprawl. In fact, just go up Highway 400, if you're not caught in a traffic jam, and take a look at the amount of development. We've seen huge amounts of developments around Highway 400 over the last five years, I would argue. If you look around the Canada's Wonderland area, there's a huge development that has been worked on for the past five or six years. I was just driving by there with my wife on Monday as we were coming down to the Legislature and I remarked to myself as I looked at it the amount of development that we have there. What we've got is a cookie-cutter approach to planning. It's like house, house, house, house, house, a street and a whole bunch more houses. There's really not a lot of creativity about how we've approached planning in that particular area.

One of the things that we looked at when we were on the committee back in 1990 under the NDP government was, how do we use existing space better? In other words, infilling. One of the things we need to look at is, rather than moving to a concept where we have the population moving from downtown cores out into the suburbs, we should be looking at how we can maintain good, healthy lifestyles in the centre of a city in order to encourage people to stay within the downtown area.

That's what you call infilling, and one of the ways you do that is by proper planning—addressing issues, for example, like traffic. Are people able to live in a downtown community without needing to utilize a car? If we can keep people off the roads, there's less pollution, less traffic congestion and just a healthier place for people to live. How do we deal with issues of transit? For example,

if I happen to live on the corner of Bay and Edward, where I do, at 633 Bay, am I able to move and do my shopping three, five or six blocks away, either by a nice walk, without having to worry about leapfrogging through traffic, or if I need to go a little bit further, how can I get onto the transit system to be able to move?

How do you plan quiet spaces within those cities? If I live in the downtown area and I decide I want to take a little walk, I can take a little walk and enjoy a calm area in the city where there's not as much traffic, and I'm able to enjoy some of the parks—making sure that we do that type of planning when it comes to the developments of our cities.

We have a golden opportunity with the development of the waterfront. If we go that way, and I know that's somewhat controversial, we need to take a look at those issues so that if people decide they want to live in the downtown core—and we should try to enhance and promote that—we do a good job of planning. So when people do make the choice, they're making a choice that makes some sense from a quality-of-life perspective. Those are the kinds of things that we were trying to put in place by which of changes to the Planning Act.

There were a whole raft of other issues with regard to the appeal process. For example, if a municipality decided to change the zoning in a community over a particular piece of land because of whatever development was going on, there would be a sane and rational process for people to be able to raise an objection. The whole question of intervener funding was first raised by our government because most citizens don't have the dollars necessary to appear before the Ontario Municipal Board, the OMB, and to have the lawyers and the legal experts they need to put together a submission that allows them to get to the OMB and, second, to make the argument once they are there. We argued that there should be some form of intervener funding to allow citizens who are affected by a particular development in their community to be able to represent themselves in a way that they were at least on the same footing legally with the developers or other proponents who happened to have large interests in that project and were able to spend the kind of money needed to create the briefs and hire the lawyers etc to get before the Ontario Municipal Board.

The unfortunate part is that all of those positive changes that were made in the Planning Act—I think it was the 1992 or 1993 Planning Act; I can't remember the exact year—virtually all of them were thrown out the door by the Tories when they were elected in 1995. I really regretted that at the time and I still regret it now, because we tried, under the Planning Act, to deal with many of the things this government is now trying to deal with more than 10 years later. I think that's rather unfortunate, because if we had kept the Planning Act—I'm not saying it was perfect. I'm just saying a lot of progressive things were done. There were a lot of public hearings, as far as consultation on white papers, and also by way of legislative committees that travelled, I believe, an entire winter on that particular issue.

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We had the opportunity to develop some pretty good legislation, very simple things; like when a municipality is building a new sidewalk, they cut the curb so the person who is needing to move in a wheelchair or a person who has difficulty walking doesn't have to step over the curb. Issues like traffic lights: making sure that we take into account that there are people who are not able to see and need to have the audible signals on traffic lights on corners where it would make sense to do that, because there is a known population that frequents that area that has need for such traffic lights. All of those things were looked at under the NDP government in its Planning Act—if I remember correctly, Minister Cooke was the one who passed that as municipal affairs minister—all of which was basically done away with when the Conservatives came to power.

Then I sat on the second committee, which was the committee that the Tories put in place. It was the ballyhooed repeal of the NDP Planning Act. They basically went out and destroyed virtually all of the work we had done and, I would argue, to a certain extent some of the work that the former Peterson government had done in running up to making the changes that we eventually ended up making as New Democrats. I thought that was rather unfortunate.

The ironic part, and the reason I raise this, is that after the government made the changes to the Planning Act, I was sitting on committee and saying, "You're going to regret the day that you did that, because you're going to have some bad planning, some very bad decisions that will come back to haunt us. But, number 2, you're doing it wrong. You're making changes to the Planning Act, in regard to the powers of the OMB and the powers of citizens to be able to get to the OMB, that at the end of the day are unmanageable. You're going to end up having to bring more legislation to the Legislature to fix the problems that you create in the repeal of our Planning Act and by not putting something that's better or, in your view, more streamlined into the legislation."

Unfortunately, that's exactly what happened. That legislation ended up, by way of the government majority, being passed; and then, when passed, we found there were all kinds of problems. For example, we limited the ability of citizens to get before the OMB. What a dumb thing to do. Citizens are the ones who are affected by planning. Let's say I live in community X and somebody wants to build a hog farm right next to my neighbourhood. I should have the right—not that I have anything against hog farmers. They're an integral part of our community of Ontario. Hog farmers are people who have worked hard at a business that is needed in the province of Ontario. But do you put a hog farm right next to a sensitive area, where you've got a number of people living in a community? Those are pretty real issues.

Well, the government put an amendment to the legislation that said, in short, if in the view of the OMB somebody had a vexatious application to appear before the board, they could determine what was vexatious and

prevent that person from getting before the board. Let's put this idea: If you have a pro-development OMB, they're going to see something fairly vexatious. The threshold for vexation is certainly going to be lower for a pro-development board than it would be for a board that's not necessarily non-pro-development but more consistent with good planning practices.

I always thought that was dumb. I always thought that it was dumb that the government should take the position of not allowing citizens to go before the OMB to have their day in court. After all, we do live in a democracy. People should have the right to disagree with decisions the government makes, either municipally or provincially. They should have a mechanism to express that view.

Now the problem with planning is, you can't express that by way of a provincial ballot. It's pretty hard to say, "I'm going to vote for or against the government. We're going to form a government on the basis of a planning issue," let's say, "in downtown Vaughan." Certainly the people in downtown Vaughan might vote for a candidate who believes in their view, but certainly a person in Kenora, Timmins or Hamilton is not going to vote on the basis of what's happening in Vaughan. So one of the good ways, other than local municipal election results, for the citizen to be able to get some impact on decision-making and have their say in court was their ability to get to the Ontario Municipal Board. That's something I always agreed with.

I don't see a restoration of the right of people to get to the Ontario Municipal Board in this legislation. I'm just saying, if we're trying to make some changes to the Planning Act by way of this legislation, we should, especially on the issue of the Greenbelt Protection Act, which deals with the Oak Ridges moraine, give citizens an increased ability to get to the board, should they have a concern. I would even go so far as to suggest that there should be some sort of intervener funding available. For example, we all went through the debate on the Oak Ridges moraine. I remember the Conservative government, upon being elected, basically opened up the Oak Ridges moraine to development—big long story.

Myself, along with our critic, Marilyn Churley, the member for Toronto-Danforth, who has worked very hard on this particular issue, fought the government tooth and nail all the way. I remember going to debates with Steve Gilchrist, the then parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, I think at one point, and eventually minister for a very short while—got himself in trouble and had to resign—fortunately, unfortunately, depending on which side of that resignation you were on. But I remember going to debates in the area affected by the Oak Ridges moraine, and I was always astounded at the size of the crowds that came out for those particular debates or rallies, opposed to the development of the Oak Ridges moraine.

The government tried to argue that it needed to do this development for whatever reasons they were putting forward, and at the end of the day came up with a pretty

weak response, I think, where they basically said they were going to allow 6,500 or 6,200 housing units to be developed on the Oak Ridges moraine.

I remember us, in opposition, along with the Liberals being really opposed to that saying, "Whoa, you can't have any development on the Oak Ridges moraine. It's like trying to build the Adams mine in Kirkland Lake. You don't do those things on an aquifer. It just doesn't make any sense. If there's going to be any kind of development, it has to be done under good planning law." That was our big problem: If you're going to have any development on the Oak Ridges moraine, you have to have a Planning Act that deals with those issues that are sensitive to the problems that arise when you develop a housing development or industrial complex on something like a moraine. I would argue you probably have to try to keep that down to a pretty darned dull roar, but if there is any development, it has to be done in the confines of a good Planning Act.

At the time, Liberals and New Democrats fought together against the Tories. I remember going to those speeches. Mr Colle was there, and other Liberal members; I remember the late Mr Agostino being at a couple of them. They were passionate defenders of the people on the Oak Ridges moraine. I remember going to the debates, and it was always about who was going to defend the Oak Ridges moraine people more? Was it going to be the New Democrats or the Liberals?

We would go to the debates and say, "You can't trust the Liberals. They're going to tell you what they want to tell you now because there's an election looming. But, at the end the day, they're pretty cozy with developers." We saw what happened during the Peterson era, when the Peterson government was in power from 1985 to 1990. They really snuggled up with the developers. It was a real close bond between the developers and the province of Ontario. You just had to look at the fundraising that happened within the province. I remember really well the coziness that was developed between the developers in Ontario and the Liberals. We tried to tell people at the time: "You can't trust the Liberals on this. At the end of the day, if they get elected, they're going to forget that promise quicker than you can shake a stick. They're going to completely forget that they made that promise to you."

I remember people getting mad at me for raising that at public debates. I remember one particular debate that I went to. It was Mr Colle and Mr Gilchrist who were at that one. I remember raising that, and the organizers got mad at me. They challenged me at the meeting and said, "We don't want you being partisan when you come to this meeting." And I said, "I'm not being partisan, I'm just telling you how it is. I don't believe for one second the Liberals are going to keep their commitment to stop development on the Oak Ridges moraine." They said, "Mr Bisson, you're taking a partisan view. You're a nice guy, and that's why we invited you, but you're being much too partisan."

What's the first thing Dalton McGuinty did after being elected in October? How many days after? It was within

days of being elected. All of a sudden, it was total amnesia on the promise. They completely forgot what they promised the citizens of Ontario. But I knew that; I said that. I repeated that at debates, to the agitation of some of the organizers. Basically, they went in and broke their commitment to the people of Ontario, especially people who are affected by the Oak Ridges moraine, and they allowed development to happen. Now, the Liberals are, you know—

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): God bless them.

Mr Bisson: God bless them. They get elected. "Vote for change. Rather than 6,200 houses, we're going to build 6,000." What change. Oh, that was so exciting.

Mr Marchese: That's an improvement.

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Mr Bisson: It's better. It's in the right direction—not very far, but in the right direction. I just say to the Liberals, I wish you would at least keep some of your campaign promises. Some of them I agree with. Some of my friends—they are still my friends and I'm not going to hold it against them—voted Liberal on the basis of your promises. And I would say to some of my friends, "But you can't trust them on issues such as the Oak Ridges moraine, bringing the minimum wage to \$8 an hour, auto insurance etc. You can't trust them because at the end of the day, a Tory is a Liberal, a Liberal is a Tory." I always say to people at election time, "Liberals talk like New Democrats, but once they become elected, they act just like Tories." Just look at Jean Chrétien. Remember him? Monsieur Chrétien, who was elected Prime Minister of Canada, the guy who left all the time bombs for Paul Martin—but that's another story.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Lit little bombs—like poof.

Mr Bisson: Poof. Threw little bombs over—exactly. I remember listening to him during the debate in the 1997 federal election, I believe it was.

Mr Marchese: Wasn't it 1993, when they got elected?

Mr Bisson: You're right, 1993. My mistake. He ran around, and when you listened to him, you thought he was a New Democrat. "I'm going to scrap the GST. It's terrible what it does to the people."

Mr Marchese: And then he denied he even said it.

Mr Bisson: My Lord, he got elected and denied he ever said it, like my good friend Mr Marchese says. Then he said, "NAFTA—I get elected, I take NAFTA and I rip it up. I rip it up in the House of Commons, because it's a bad deal for Canada." Not only did he not rip it up; Mr Chrétien got elected and then negotiated stronger trade deals for industrialists in this country, to the consternation of the workers—especially the workers of Ontario. So I just say to people, I want to remind you, we're there again.

Prior to the election, the Liberals promised what? No development on the Oak Ridges moraine, zero. Once elected, like Monsieur Chrétien, they break their promise. They get there and they say: "Oh, we're not going to

have 6,200 or 6,300 houses. We think that's too many. We'll have 6,000. That way we don't break our promise." Well, there's an old saying that you can't fool all of the people all of the time. I don't have enough time to go through it, but I think sometimes you've got to wonder.

I want to say again to the members of the Liberal caucus, and to the members of the Legislature generally, that we generally support what you're trying to do with this bill. There is a problem we have with the development we're going to see in Niagara with regard to the new housing development that is being looked at in that particular area. My colleague Madame Churley has raised this issue and is quite concerned, as are people in the Niagara area. We have some concerns about that.

We have concerns about your not keeping your promise to scrap the development on the Oak Ridges moraine. But this bill deals with some of the planning issues that are affected by way of how development should happen in that area. We'll allow the bill to go to committee, because I think we need to have a pretty good discussion at committee, and especially to make some amendments at clause-by-clause, to make sure that the bill actually does what it purports to do by way of the title.

I appreciate this time for debate, and I very much look forward to the questions and comments from the members opposite.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? The member for Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge.

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): It's those multiple municipal ridings that make it extremely interesting, particularly in light of this particular legislation, as it sits directly within the study area, as do many of the ridings. It's an opportunity to look comprehensively at the Golden Horseshoe. To my knowledge, it is the first real attempt to do that. Certainly there have been planning initiatives in the past in a broad way. The Oak Ridges moraine debate during the last sitting of this Legislature was an important debate to help articulate the importance of groundwater, the cold-water streams, the urban forest, rural and local forests, and agricultural opportunities. This is the first real opportunity the government has taken to look at the Golden Horseshoe in its entirety. I think it's a really strong recognition that the greater Toronto area, which has always been the focus of activity, doesn't stand alone. It stands in a context, and that context extends beyond its own boundaries.

There is an opportunity for municipalities to take a bit of a breather in some respects over the next year or so, once the legislation is in place, so that the consultation can go on effectively. There are lots of opportunities within those municipalities to look at what they are currently doing, to look within their current urban environments at other opportunities that will exist for further urban development, to look at intensification, as well as look at their edges. This is part of it. This doesn't say there won't be any growth; it says that during this study time there is a boundary that says if you're not currently

in an urban envelope, you can't come forward for development. It doesn't say there won't be any development in those areas.

Rightfully, there will be a need to accommodate the growth in the GTA, and there are areas that will be well suited for development, but this is a bit of a breather to look at those very carefully and, I think, an opportunity for municipalities to look at what they currently have, the context they're in, without feeling under the gun for approval or for the Ontario Municipal Board to impose decisions upon them.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments? The member for Simcoe East.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I just want to clarify, Mr Speaker, that it's Simcoe North. I didn't want you to put that in Hansard for a long period of time. Simcoe East used to be a much smaller riding. When I came along, they knew they needed a bigger riding for me to look after.

I'm pleased to comment on a few things today. I want to start by saying that I have taken a lot of my leads from my colleague Julia Munro, who is having some difficult times with her health right now, and who I'm sure will be in the House later in the week. Julia has analyzed this bill inside out and upside down. She has some strong points and some areas in the bill where she's supportive of things, but she also has some concerns.

One of the concerns that I know I've talked about in the past is compensation. There's no question that we've grown into a trend in Ontario over many decades where people are sort of using their land as their retirement package. It's important to note that a lot of people were counting on some of their land for resale. They weren't all going to be multi-millionaires; some were just going to have the opportunity to sell it, and hopefully there would be some kind of speculation down the road. That may or may not happen with this. So I hope there is a process in place, whether by regulation or something we add to the bill—I think the government has to look at a type of compensation package, because eventually this land basically becomes almost dead. It stays as green land, but there will be no possible use for it for anything else in the future. I think we have to be very careful about that.

Some of the comments I've heard so far have been interesting. Mrs Munro will probably be back later in the week, and hopefully we'll get a chance to hear some of her comments in the next few days. I look forward to further debate.

Mr Marchese: I congratulate the member from Timmins-James Bay again for raising many important issues, one of which was the Oak Ridges moraine. The Oak Ridges moraine gave the Liberals one heck of a headache. Prior to the election they all said, "We're going to stop the Oak Ridges moraine." The Premier was convinced he could do it. In opposition, he thought he would get powers when he became Premier and just do it. But the problem is that when you become Premier, you understand your limitations.

They realized they couldn't stop the Oak Ridges moraine. I think they went from preventing the construction of 6,500 units to the building 6,000 units, a total gain of 500 units. The Liberals say, "Good heavens, it's better than what the Tories got." That's not what you said in opposition. In opposition you said you were going to stop the entire development. That's why it's so hard for us to believe you, now that you're in government, in terms of any promise you might make. It's hard to trust you. It was important for the member from Timmins-James Bay to raise this as a concern.

I have as great concerns about Liberals and developers as I do about Tories and developers, because they are so close. It's hard to distinguish a Liberal close to a developer from a Tory close to a developer, except maybe by the suit, but I don't even think the suit could distinguish one from the other. So I've got to worry about development as it relates to developers, as it relates to anything this government is saying. That's why, as we support this bill, we want it to go for second reading because there are a whole lot of concerns, including the task force and whether we're going to delineate what kind of powers they have and many other issues the member has raised.

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Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Bill 27, the Greenbelt Protection Act, is certainly an important bill for someone who has spent 18 years in municipal politics in the city of Peterborough. Most importantly, there is the whole issue of planning: orderly planning and how we use existing space better; how planning can prevent gridlock down the road; and planning that encourages the infilling of existing spaces.

For someone who is new to the Legislature, you sometimes get overwhelmed. The issues of education and health care come up quite frequently as the number one and two priorities, but certainly something that follows behind those is the whole issue of planning, particularly in the areas that have been identified through this bill: the regional municipalities of Durham, Halton, Peel and York and the cities of Hamilton and Toronto. It's certainly an area of Ontario that faces a considerable amount of pressure in terms of potential development.

Some years ago, I had a chance to be in the Niagara Peninsula to actually tour a winery down there: Pillitteri Estates, a small but very successful operation. What struck me as I was touring that operation were the pressures that operation and similar operations face down through that whole area in terms of subdivision development, other agricultural activities that go on in that area, and the need to have some orderly development there.

My friend across the aisle talks about Liberal relationships with developers. It's interesting that if you put in place a clear set of guidelines and requisites of how they are to operate, there's no real problem, because they want orderly development to take place for the health of the economy—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. The member from Timmins-James Bay has two minutes to reply.

Mr Bisson: I want to thank the members across the way for their comments. I want to repeat what my good friend from Trinity-Spadina has said: I remember well the promises that were made. I remember the promise made by the Liberals leading up to the last election. And the promise was what? That there would be no development whatsoever on the Oak Ridges moraine. Mr McGuinty, then the leader of the official opposition, the Liberal Party of Ontario, said he was going to stop the development of the Oak Ridges moraine.

I was at debates with Tories and Liberals where I would point out, "The Liberals—don't trust them. At the end of the day, they're so close to developers." Remember 1985 to 1990, and the closeness, the snugleness. They were actually glued to some of the developers. In fact, there were many scandals. Remember the Peterson scandals over the money that was coming from developers at Liberal fundraisers? Let's not go there because that's unfair. It's a different group of Liberals.

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): Public auto insurance.

Mr Bisson: Oh, no, but they broke the promise. My question is, can they be very different?

I just have to say, you made the promise prior to the election, you made the promise during the election. You were very clear that you were going to stop the development of the Oak Ridges moraine.

Hon Ms Pupatello: Public auto insurance, free tuition, social contract.

Mr Marchese: Sandra remembers. She was there.

Mr Bisson: Sandra was there. I remember that my good friend Sandra Pupatello, the now minister of something, was apoplectic. I remember her getting up in the House, and she was one of the ones—

Mr Marchese: She was there, feisty and pugilistic.

Mr Bisson: She was one of the feistier ones, I agree. But they forgot the promise. Something happened on October 2. They got elected and they said, "Did we make a promise to the people of Ontario on the Oak Ridges moraine? How are we going to fix this?"

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: Mr Caplan was there too. I remember well my good backgammon friend. We never got a chance to play yet. Basically they promised they would have none, and rather than 6,200 or 6,300 housing units approved, they did 6,000. Vote for change? I don't see much change here.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I'm pleased to rise today and speak in support of the proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2003. This is an important piece of legislation, and I'm pleased to share my time today with the member for Guelph-Wellington.

In this legislation, we are taking these important first steps to contain sprawl, to manage growth responsibly and to create a permanent greenbelt. Why are we doing that? We're doing that to enhance the quality of life for all Ontarians and for those people who live in my own

community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore. And as captured in the preamble of the bill, we're doing this because the government of Ontario recognizes that in order to protect environmentally sensitive land and farmland and contain urban sprawl, there's an immediate need to study an area in the part of Ontario known as the Golden Horseshoe.

The government also recognizes that clear limits must be set on development in order to protect this valuable green resource as a greenbelt, for the long term, for future generations.

Our government also recognizes that we need good planning for environmentally sensitive and agricultural lands, to ensure sustainable development that will benefit all of us, in my own community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore and all of the residents of the Golden Horseshoe area. These are among the reasons this government is moving proactively on this legislation.

There's been lots of talk over the years about the need to protect greenbelt in the city of Toronto, in the Golden Horseshoe, in communities like my own. This is the first time a government takes these important steps. There was talk about this in 1976, when the provincial government proposed setting aside a 5,200-acre parkway belt, two to 30 kilometres wide, parallel to Highway 7. It didn't happen, because of the lack of political will and because the provincial government did not initiate a firm protection plan for these lands.

We're doing this today and we're not alone in knowing the importance of protecting this land and of stopping sprawl. We're joined in the knowledge that important community organizations, such as the David Suzuki Foundation, are supporting the need to stop urban sprawl.

Recently, last October, the David Suzuki Foundation released a proposal, a plan, that said we need to stop the ever-expanding sprawl of Canadian cities. It is one of the issues that must be addressed. It's responsible for increased air pollution, for rising obesity rates and for loss of agricultural land. David Suzuki himself said, "The time to address this critical issue is now.... The more cities sprawl outward, the more we damage the environment and our health." David Suzuki is knowledgeable about these issues. I am pleased that someone of his calibre agrees with the fact that we need to stop sprawling communities.

Many studies have been set out that have talked about the correlations between sprawl, health and environmental problems. Those are important issues for our government that we are proud to move on at this time.

Other community groups, such as the Sierra Club of Canada, have talked about the fact that suburban sprawl development is hazardous to Ontario taxpayers' pocket-books and to the environment. Costs, according to the Sierra club, are \$70 billion, or more than \$14,000 per person, as sprawling housing development continues over the next 25 years in the greater Toronto area.

According to them, "Sprawl is costing us billions, destroying ecosystems, and increasing smog. It's time to smarten up." I am very proud to be part of a government

that is smartening up, that for the first time ever is taking action to make sure we reduce smog, that we reduce gridlock, that we really deal with the expansion of the area in the Golden Horseshoe.

As many of you will know, the region of Ontario known as the Golden Horseshoe is growing by 115,000 people every year. Within 15 years it will be the third-largest urban region in North America, after New York and Los Angeles. This phenomenal growth, as exciting as it is, has presented some difficult issues for us: tough economic issues, environmental issues and quality-of-life challenges for millions of people who live and work in the region.

Many of those are my constituents. I'm one of those individuals myself who, over the last number of years, has commented on the reduced quality of life in the city of Toronto as the result of smog, as a result of gridlock, as a result of our lost agricultural lands in the surrounding communities. These are important first steps and ones that I'm proud to support today.

We all know, members of this government know, that we can't thrive as a province if goods and services are stuck in gridlock, that our families can't thrive if they're stuck on the highway and are not home with their kids, or if there are no green spaces left to enjoy. As a result, our government is determined to enhance the quality of life for people in the Golden Horseshoe by containing sprawl and encouraging environmental protection.

This commitment starts with the protection of a greenbelt where hundreds and thousands of acres of environmentally sensitive land and farmland will be protected for future generations. We're proposing that we move on a new initiative of managed growth.

Managing the growth in the city of Toronto, in my own very fast-growing community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, is one that I often hear about when I'm having an opportunity to speak to the people in my own riding. They talk to me about the fact that they want to ensure that we have an orderly planning system, that our growth is managed, that we infill those important, already developed spaces, and that planning policies that have been put in place with thought and process are maintained by the OMB. Those are important initiatives for managing growth in our province. We need to encourage quality of life and we need to ensure real environmental protection as well.

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You might ask, why does an urban member for a riding such as Etobicoke-Lakeshore speak so extensively about something that will protect the greenbelt? There's not, I have to say, a lot of this greenbelt area in my community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, but it is a community that at its heart really focuses on the environment. On the lakefront, where we are, we're cognizant of the quality of air in our community. We look across Lake Ontario at the Lakeview generating facility, whose closure we look forward to in 2005 for the quality of air in our own community. We're a community that straddles the Gardiner and we see individuals and the traffic coming

through our community each and every day. So for a community like Etobicoke-Lakeshore, reducing sprawl means increasing density in our city and focusing businesses and residential living within the GTA.

Urban density is a good thing because it's responsible living. Urban density is a good thing for Etobicoke-Lakeshore because it increases the green area that's accessible to people living in urban environments, and it manages the supply of our usable land and demand for urban growth in an effective manner. It increases the opportunity for redevelopment. That's something that my own community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore can be very proud of: the extensive redevelopment that has happened on already developed land in our community. It decreases traffic and congestion. Again, the more folks live in the community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore and live closer to the centre of the city and use the already existing traffic infrastructure that's in place, the better it is for our air and the better it is for our traffic.

The future of Ontario holds two choices: We can continue with urban sprawl and continue to destroy our green places—our forests, our lakes, our environment—or we can embrace urban density through greenbelt protection. We can understand that how we live within our means in our environment does not require the further destruction of green spaces. Etobicoke-Lakeshore will be affected by the Greenbelt Protection Act. Etobicoke-Lakeshore is an example of a community that has thrived and is dealing well with the issue of urban density. And we're working together to increase the number of people living in our community without compromising our natural environment in Etobicoke-Lakeshore or beyond our boundaries. It's a community that I'm proud to represent. It's one that's full of promise and opportunity and it's one that will benefit from the Greenbelt Protection Act. The people in my own community who are able to spend time on our lakeshore and enjoy the lands that we've been able to protect along the lakefront know that spending time in our urban community does not mean that we forsake the greenbelts from which we all benefit. It's a piece of legislation that I'm very proud to support and I look forward to its passage.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore has indicated her preference to share her time with her colleague the member for Guelph-Wellington.

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I'm pleased to speak this afternoon in support of Bill 27. The Greenbelt Protection Act will curb urban sprawl and allow us to manage growth within the Golden Horseshoe area of southern Ontario. Why do we need to do this? There are a number of things. The population of central Ontario has grown tremendously in the past decade or so. In fact, in the Golden Horseshoe area the population increases by 115,000 people every year. By the year 2001, the central Ontario population had reached 7.5 million people. Within 25 years, we expect that will be 11 million people. That's an additional 3.5 million people in central Ontario. We cannot manage that population growth if we

do not pay attention to how we manage growth responsibly in the Golden Horseshoe area. What we know is happening now: Anybody who drives out along the 401 east or west, anybody who drives up north on the 400, knows that as you move out, area that used to be farmland is now houses. I know that when I drive up the 400 north of Toronto, I can look at what used to be family farms in Vaughan township, where both of my parents originally came from. What used to be farms that I pointed to when I was a kid and said, "This relative lives here and that relative lives there," are now subdivisions. The farmland is gone and the houses are moving out.

We know the GTA is going to continue to grow, but we have to figure out how to make that happen responsibly. We have a huge problem with gridlock. Certainly anyone who comes from the Guelph-Wellington area, from my area in Guelph, knows that we seem to be getting further from Toronto. If you tackle getting from Guelph to Toronto in the morning rush hour, it takes an extra hour above what it took a decade ago. People are spending two extra hours a day just trying to get into the city to work. We have to manage growth. We cannot allow this to simply move on in uncontrolled urban sprawl.

And it isn't just houses growing like Topsy and traffic jams becoming almost a constant state of affairs; it's where those houses are going. Those houses are going on land that we need to protect. They're going on farmland, and we cannot sustain that forever.

Only 5% of Canada's land base is classified as prime agricultural land. Of that prime agricultural land, 50% is in Ontario. But only 12% of Ontario's land base is prime agricultural land, and a lot of that land is in the Golden Horseshoe.

I was speaking to a farm family just north of Brampton recently, a family that has been farming north of Brampton for generations. They have a thriving dairy operation, but when they look the next concession over, there are houses. The houses are marching out to take over the farmland. We can't allow that to go on forever.

If you drive down the Niagara Peninsula, what used to be vineyards, what used to be orchards, is more and more being overtaken by houses. We can't allow that to go on forever. We have to figure out a way to protect our best agricultural land.

And it isn't just agricultural land; it's environmentally sensitive land. One of the things I hear at home is a concern about water quality and water quantity. If we don't protect our environmentally sensitive land, we're not going to have clean, safe, abundant water. Ontario has always prided itself on the availability of water. But if we don't pay attention, that's not going to be the situation anymore.

What are we proposing to do? We want to develop a balanced approach to growth in the Golden Horseshoe area. To that end, we have instituted a moratorium on urban growth on rural land within a greenbelt study area.

What I want to be absolutely clear about is that we have not stopped development. On any land within the

greenbelt protection area that is already zoned for urban development, the urban development process will be allowed to go ahead. It would appear that there is about a 10- or 15-year supply of land already zoned for single-family urban development and about a 20-year supply of land already zoned for development of intensive housing uses; that is, apartments and condos. We have a lot of that already planned.

What we are protecting is land that is zoned as rural, as agricultural. During the moratorium, we are not going to allow any more rural or agricultural land to succumb to urban development. What we're going to do during this time period is study how we can best do a number of things.

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To that end, we have put in place a Greenbelt Task Force. The Greenbelt Task Force is balanced. It represents municipalities, developers and environmentalists, the whole spectrum of people who have an interest in this issue. The task force has been asked to make recommendations in a number of areas. First of all, they've been asked to recommend how we can set up a permanent greenbelt around the Niagara Escarpment, to the north of Peel and out through the Oak Ridges moraine territory, because we understand that it is important to protect a greenbelt around the Golden Horseshoe area. We need to protect our natural heritage systems, we need to protect our water resources, we need to protect environmentally sensitive land, and we're going to study how we can set up a permanent greenbelt.

We've also asked how we can protect prime agricultural land. What are the areas of prime agricultural land that we must absolutely protect from urban development? So that's the second area in which the task force has been asked to make recommendations. We've also asked the task force about recreational land because, if you have 11 million people living in the Golden Horseshoe area, it's important that those people have a way to get outside into green space, into recreational land, so we want to know how to protect that.

Finally, though, and equally importantly, we will be identifying the land which is best suited for development. We want to know how we can concentrate urban growth. How can we redevelop brown fields? Those are important things because it costs us all as taxpayers; sprawl costs everybody. If we can concentrate urban growth, we can reduce the cost of servicing new land; we can reduce the cost of road construction; we can take better advantage of urban transit; we can reduce the costs of urban policing and fire protection; and we can reduce the cost of things like garbage pickup by having more concentrated urban areas. What we want to find from this process is a balanced approach to growth. We cannot continue urban sprawl. We must find a way to do this sensibly.

Now, I come from Guelph-Wellington, which is just outside the greenbelt study area, and you might think that this would not concern my constituents, but it does. My constituents talk to me about, "OK, if you protect land

inside the greenbelt, what's going to happen to the land just outside the greenbelt?" So my constituents are very anxious to be part of the discussion, and that's good because the Greenbelt Task Force has been asked to consult with a whole variety of people, and my constituents can have an opportunity to become part of that discussion.

It is important to all of us as Ontarians that we can continue to have economic development, that we can continue to have growth, but we must find a way to do that in a responsible way. I'm pleased to support this bill because that's what it's going to provide.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Bisson: I just want to say that I listened to the comments made by both members. I guess, as I said in my own speech, I agree generally with the principle that the government is taking, by way of this bill. That is, clearly what's needed is a better regime when it comes to how we do planning in the province of Ontario.

Now this bill—let's be realistic—is only dealing with what we are going to do on the Oak Ridges moraine. But what I really want to see happen over the longer term is the government bringing a bill into this House that deals with planning issues for the entire province of Ontario, because we know there are a number of problems. I know there's one coming, but I'm just saying that there are a number of issues that need to be dealt with in order to make sure that planning is done in a sane way. For example, when municipalities do simple things like reconstruct a sidewalk, we make sure that it's accessible to people with disabilities; and making sure that when we do a planning zone amendment that people have the ability to get before the Ontario Municipal Board, should they have concerns about it, and, if necessary, in certain cases, there should be some form of intervenor funding. There is a whole bunch of issues that need to be dealt with.

I was interested, however, that the members who got up and spoke—and I'm sure it was just an omission and they're going to clarify that, because this is about the Oak Ridges moraine—failed to talk about the broken promise the McGuinty government made by allowing 6,000 houses to be built on the Oak Ridges moraine. I recognize that both members who got up were not members of the former Liberal caucus and probably were not aware of the promise that former caucus made. Maybe they didn't hear it, but I want to repeat it, because I think they need to understand that there was a clear promise made, and that was, "If you vote Liberal, you're going to get change. The Liberals are not going to allow 6,500 houses or 6,300 houses to be built on the Oak Ridges moraine. No houses at all will be allowed to be built on the Oak Ridges moraine." The first thing McGuinty said when he got elected was, "I'm not going to do 6,300; I'll allow 6,000." That's a broken promise, and I want to hear somebody say, "I'm sorry."

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): What goes around comes around.

I have a couple of comments on the address from the two members of the government side. I think there's a

significant naïveté on this issue in a couple of respects; for example, the notion that the greenbelt will eliminate gridlock. I think quite the opposite: This will make the gridlock snake even longer along our highways. If you're going to stop any kind of housing development in the Golden Horseshoe, that development is going to have to go somewhere. Sure, the government members say there is this panacea, that we're all going to crowd into condos and high-rise apartments in downtown Toronto. A lot of my constituents would prefer a different kind of lifestyle. So no matter what initiatives the government brings forward, you're going to see housing develop outside of wherever this greenbelt is going to be, meaning that gridlock is actually going to get worse and be prolonged, unless there is a companion transportation strategy to move people, goods and services back and forth, and we've yet to see what that strategy is going to be.

Second, there's this notion that we should encourage urban density. Fair enough, but every time there is an issue of this nature, the NIMBY effect takes over. The evidence is to the contrary: Taxpayers and local residents will oppose greater density in downtown city areas because they don't want these massive skyscrapers going up in their backyard. I think there is a naïveté to suggest that people are going to embrace this notion of even denser growth of apartments and condominiums in their neighbourhoods.

Third, with respect to the fruit belt in Niagara, I appreciate everybody's enjoyment of the aesthetic pleasures of going through a vineyard or an orchard. The complaint I have is, why is that price borne exclusively by the communities in Niagara? Farmers are being landlocked; municipalities are restricted from development, from revenue sources coming in. Why shouldn't that cost be borne by taxpayers as a whole, to support those types of initiatives in Niagara?

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I would like to speak in favour of the bill. The Greenbelt Protection Act is the first step in trying to control urban sprawl. We are trying to protect farmland and environmentally sensitive areas, and we're also trying to set the template for carefully thought-out planning. The greenbelt is part of this government's larger growth management strategy. We have actually introduced Bill 26, the Strong Communities (Planning Amendment) Act, 2003, proposed legislation that will strengthen the power of municipalities to address the issues of urban sprawl.

I've also heard on two separate occasions now from the member for Simcoe North, and he talks about walking on his pension. I'm very familiar with the concept of walking on a pension in terms of land values. The member is looking at me, but in the community I live in, we refer to it as walking on our pension, and I do that every weekend when I go home. In that respect, as was said earlier, the land that is zoned for development is still going to stay in development. The issue is that we protect the farmland.

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When we talk about walking on our pensions, every farmer is aware that we look to the sale of our farms to

eventually be our pension plan for the future. As a farmer, I know that my farm will hold a certain value as farmland. I didn't buy it on speculation and I don't expect to sell it on speculation either. I expect that it will sell in terms of its value as farmland and nothing more than that. I don't think that the farmers in the Niagara area or in the Golden Horseshoe, or the greenbelt study area, have any concerns in that respect.

The Acting Speaker: We have time for one further question and comment.

Mr Dunlop: Again it's a pleasure to be here, and I look forward to the comments from the member for Simcoe-Grey in a few moments.

I'd like to go back to the idea of what we call walking on the pension. I know that may sound—I fully understand as well what you're saying. I understand the land is not zoned, it is in farmland in its current position, but you have to remember that there are literally thousands and thousands of farmers throughout the province who have thought that down the road their development that would be near a community would possibly be their retirement. I'm not saying that's right or wrong, but what I'm saying is that the people have thought of that along the way.

When I talk about compensation, it is that basically their land has much less value when they can't rezone it to an industrial or a commercial or a residential down the road, and that's a fact. If it could be rezoned, if on an official plan amendment it could be changed to, for example, residential, the lots would have far more value per acre. So those people are actually out in the cold now with this particular piece of legislation. They may be able to sell it to another farmer or pass it on, and I'm hoping the economy will grow strong enough so we'll be able to do that with our farmers and actually pass it from one generation to another, but that's not really what I'm seeing out there. The families of a lot of farmers I'm talking about, guys in their mid-50s and 60s, are not wanting to take over the family farm and they cannot make a good enough living for the kind of work they have to put into it. So it will be interesting to see where the bill goes with that.

I look forward to further debate from all members of this House. I think there are a lot of good things in the greenbelt bill but we also have to be very careful with things like compensation.

The Acting Speaker: In reply, the member for Guelph-Wellington.

Mrs Sandals: I would like to thank the members for Timmins-James Bay, Erie-Lincoln, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and Simcoe North—not East—for their comments on the bill.

First of all, as my colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex noted, this is not the only legislation with respect to planning. In fact, we do have a first set of amendments coming to the Planning Act. We would in fact agree with my colleague from Timmins-James Bay that there are some flaws in the Planning Act and we fully intend to address them.

However, I must comment that although the member for Timmins-James Bay tried to characterize this as being about the Oak Ridges moraine, it's about a much bigger issue than the Oak Ridges moraine. It's about all development within the Golden Horseshoe. However, what I would like to point out is that if the previous government had had this legislation in place and the balanced planning that we're looking at and the protection of environmentally sensitive areas in place, we would not repeatedly be having the Oak Ridges moraine discussion, because we would have been able to effectively protect that land.

I would also like to comment—the member from Erie-Lincoln spoke as if we were stopping all urban development within the Golden Horseshoe. That is simply not true. Anything that is already zoned for urban development will continue to be developed. In fact, at the end of this process I fully expect that there is some land that is currently zoned rural that will ultimately become urban land. What we're talking about is planning to ensure this proceeds in an orderly fashion.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. Further debate on this bill?

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I'm pleased to join in this debate. I think it has been a rather good debate, sitting here for the last hour and a half. Some of the problems with respect to this greenbelt legislation have come forward. We've heard people in favour of and opposed to it. But I'm kind of angry because I am just shocked that Mr. Gerretsen, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, made this announcement December 16, when I'm probably the guy in this House most affected by this legislation.

In fact, today the Toronto Star—if everyone looks at the article called from “From Farmland to City Sprawl, in One Swoop”—talks about 115,000 people coming to the Bradford West Gwillimbury area with a development that's proposed by Geranium Corp. The reason Geranium Corp, as they say in the article, has come to South Simcoe is because of this bill that we're debating here today, Bill 27. They know to stay out of the GTA now. They know to stay out of anything where this study area is taking place. So they are proposing to—my God. That's a small portion at the south end of my riding and Joe Tascona's riding. It would quintuple the population that exists there today. The proposal just went to the Bradford West Gwillimbury council. The fact of the matter is, as they say here, they have to go there because, “Welcome to South Simcoe, ground zero in the development wars.” This is the next stop after Vaughan.

I say to the member from Guelph-Wellington, who said, “People out in Guelph have to drive an extra couple of hours,” I just want to tell the government that when you're going to do this greenbelting—and I, to an extent, am in favour of greenbelting. I liked the Ottawa idea, when I worked for the Honourable Perrin Beatty in Ottawa in the mid-1980s and lived in Ottawa. But it seems to me they went about it a little differently. They actually bought up the land, did proper compensation and

set up the National Capital Commission to look after it. I don't know where you're going to get the billions to compensate farmers. But the fact of the matter is, you're driving development into the potato capital of Ontario, where I was born and raised and my family has lived over 260 years. That's Alliston. That's New Tecumseth. That's where this proposal is going, in Bond Head, the very southern tip of my riding, because the developers have all decided to move.

Now there are no jobs there. There is Honda in Alliston, where people commute two hours around. About 30% percent of their employees actually come from the Alliston area, and some come from Guelph, Orangeville, Shelburne and Toronto. But that's about it. So all you're going to do is build bigger development—no new roads or anything. I don't think the government has money for any new roads or infrastructure up there. All these people are going to continue to work in Toronto. If you live in Barrie and you drive through at 5 o'clock in the morning—by the way, if I want to get to a meeting now at 8:30 in the morning here at Queen's Park, I have to make sure I leave my house in Wasaga Beach, where I've lived for the last nine years, at 10 after five in the morning. So I understand it.

But there are no jobs in Wasaga Beach. There are companies that have just moved out of Barrie, so unless you're going to force companies to locate to Barrie, everyone's still going to be driving into Toronto. Gridlock's going to get worse, because the plans that all three stripes of government have had for the past 20 years to expand Highway 400 to 12 lanes and put in some commuter lanes haven't happened, because nobody has really had the money. Maybe your government will find the money, maybe you'll toll-road it, whatever. But the fact of the matter is, everyone still has to go down the 400. They still have to work in Toronto. Gridlock will get worse.

I do want to talk for the last minute here today about compensation. It seems to me this legislation is the cart before the horse. When we want to build new highways—I'm building a new piece in my riding right now, between Stayner and Collingwood—you go around and talk to the property owners. You don't bring the legislation in first. You go around and talk to property owners. You make agreements with them. You buy up the land. You don't, before you start that process, give draconian powers to the minister, which this does. This obliterates local planning. It ignores municipal councils. It's anti-democratic. I think you're going to have a lot of problems with it.

I don't think that all of us on this side of the House are going to disagree with you. As Garfield Dunlop from Simcoe North said just a minute ago, there are some good parts and some bad parts. I thought, honestly, that our greenbelting was the Oak Ridges moraine. The foundation is there to help compensate and look after things that are undone in that deal yet, because it's an unfinished project. You might be biting off more than you can chew with this greenbelting right now. The lawsuits

will probably start long before you get your study finished—from farmers, from businesses and from people who are fearful of having their lands confiscated, or may very well get their lands confiscated.

The Acting Speaker: It being 6 o'clock, this House now stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 in the afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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 Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Alvin Curling
 Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
 Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller
 Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
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		Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)
		Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
		Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)
		Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
		Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)
		Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)
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Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Hon / L'hon Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Scarborough East / -Est	Chambers, Hon / L'hon Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Hon / L'hon Dwight (L) Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Hon / L'hon Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Hon / L'hon Gerry (L) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement	York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Hon / L'hon Alvin (L) Speaker / Président	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Hon / L'hon Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St Catharines	Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J. (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs		
St Paul's	Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique		
Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

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of Ontario**

First Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 14 April 2004

Mercredi 14 avril 2004



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 14 April 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 14 avril 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TAXATION

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):

The McTaxMe—excuse me—the McGuinty government is at it again. With one hand on the wheel and the other in your pocket, they are determined to drive the Ontario economy into recession canyon. After promising in their election platform not to raise taxes, they have shown over and over again that a Liberal promise is meaningless.

Their latest plan to tax meals under \$4 is so unconscionable as to cause one to lose their appetite. This tax is a full frontal assault on the poor, on seniors and on average working families in the province of Ontario. This tax will cost jobs and place an already ailing industry, still trying to recover from SARS, in a very difficult position. Restaurateurs such as Don Carty, Tony Yantha, James McCluskey and Marty Recoskie, in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, have told me that this tax is absolutely wrong and will lead to job losses.

The McGuinty government claims that this new tax will help fight obesity. Well, the fat is in their heads. This tax is a cash grab, period, from those in society who can least afford it. It's no wonder the Premier's approval rating is so dismal. He's in a hole, yet he rejects the ladder and instead reaches for the shovel. Keep on digging, Dalton.

ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlotten-

burgh): I rise today to speak of our history and celebration thereof. As we approach the anniversary of D-Day, the struggle of our Canadian soldiers at Normandy on June 6, 1944, I would like to take this opportunity to commemorate and pay heed to the hundreds of thousands of Canadian soldiers and youths who fought on our behalf to ensure the success of the Allied operations in World War II.

On that fateful day, 20,000 Canadian boys were killed or wounded, a fact that is eloquently written in a trilogy by George G. Blackburn, a lifetime member of the Lost Villages Historical Society in my constituency. His firsthand experiences helped him pen the Guns of Normandy, the Guns of Victory, and Where the Hell are the Guns?

History is the key to our future. By learning and understanding our past, our children learn of our history and culture, and hopefully heed our advice and avoid our faults. I strongly believe that the teaching of history in our children's schools is an essential aspect of the learning process. Our children deserve a solid understanding of the past in order for them to understand their futures.

Recently, Mr Blackburn contacted me with his concerns over the lack of historical knowledge of our children and youth. As a former educator, I concur that history is a key aspect of any child's education, and his trilogy and books like them are important to curriculum studies in Ontario. I stress that all members of this House take the time to educate the youth of their ridings on pinnacle points of Canadian history, such as the battle of Normandy.

STAN DARLING

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I rise in the House today to honour a remarkable man from the beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. Stan Darling proudly represented his constituents as the Progressive Conservative member of Parliament for 21 years, from 1972 to 1993, through six consecutive elections. He passed away on Easter Sunday, April 11, at the age of 92.

Stan was a wonderful family man and a great friend. Throughout his life, he distinguished himself by his service to others. I can't possibly mention all the boards and organizations on which Stan Darling served.

He was reeve of Burks Falls, president of the Georgian Bay development council and a member of the Burks Falls Lion's Club, where he had an exceptional attendance record for over 60 years.

Stan gave me his kind support as I embarked on my political career. In his 90th year he spent a day with me campaigning door to door during the 2001 by-election and more recently served as honorary chair of my 2003 campaign. He has been a great role model for me.

Stan was an outstanding politician. He made a point of attending every riding function and taking care of as many people as he possibly could.

He will always be remembered on Parliament Hill for his crusades for the environment and against acid rain pollution. One of the highlights of his political career was the signing of the treaty on acid rain in 1991.

Stan was a generous man, donating to charity all the profits from the writing of his memoirs, *The Darling Diaries*.

Few will come close to Stan Darling's outstanding record of service to his constituents, his family, his friends and his community. He is an inspiration to all of us in public office. Stan Darling will be sadly missed by his family, friends and the community in which he served and lived for so many years.

EDUCATION

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): On Tuesday, March 9, 2004, I had the pleasure of visiting Mason Road Junior Public School in my riding as part of the Minister of Education's back-to-school initiative. During this visit, I met with staff and students, along with Toronto District School Board trustee Gary Crawford.

Mr Don Snow, principal, took me on a tour of each and every classroom of the school, which caters to students from junior kindergarten all the way through grade 6. I heard first hand the concerns, dreams and suggestions on how to improve the education system.

This school educates students who come primarily from immigrant families and single-parent homes. This means that teachers have the challenge of not only making sure the students are successfully taught the curriculum required by the Ministry of Education, but also acting as a social and emotional support to many of these students.

These challenges led many teachers to tell us that they would prefer to have smaller class sizes, especially in the all-important early grades. They also want to be partners in working with the government to improve the education system, rather than being portrayed as obstacles to change. On that note, Principal Snow would like to convey to the government his satisfaction with the approach that Minister Kennedy and the Dalton McGuinty government are taking when it comes to respecting teachers and his desire to work with them.

1340

KEMPTON HOWARD

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I stand today to pay tribute to and honour the life of Kempton Howard. Kempton was 24 years old, handsome, bright and full of positive energy, which he shared with others. He grew up in the Blake-Boulton community until he was shot and killed in December by a single bullet to the head near his home. That murder is still unresolved.

Kempton was an amazing young man, full of promise. He had developed into a role model for other young people and was awarded a youth Ontario Volunteer Service Award. He had just secured a Boys and Girls Clubs of Ontario scholarship for college this year.

Kempton was a respected and effective youth leader and mentor in the Blake-Boulton community. He was a part-time staff person at Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre, contributing as the leader of the Torch Club, an after-school children's program leader, a head

summer day camp counsellor and a basketball coach for youth. He was 24 years old.

Kempton Howard will be forever remembered in the hearts of the children and youth of the Blake-Boulton community, colleagues at Eastview and other Boys and Girls Clubs, as well as other communities throughout Ontario.

Since Kempton was murdered, I have come to know his mother well and admire her greatly. Despite her overwhelming grief, she continues to participate in the community and is involved in a neighbourhood safety plan. She knows that is what her beloved son would want.

I want to take this opportunity to offer my sincere sympathy to Kempton's mother, Joan Howard, his brother, Kareem, and his relatives in Trinidad. I know he will live forever in our hearts.

BRAMPTON ARTS COUNCIL

Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I want to bring attention to an important milestone that has been reached in the riding of Brampton Centre. This year, the Brampton Arts Council is celebrating its 25th anniversary.

The Brampton Arts Council is an important community organization in my riding. It is a non-profit, charitable organization. It has provided essential support and advocacy for artists and has served as a strong voice for the Brampton arts community.

Brampton has a vibrant arts community. It includes our actors, singers, dancers, painters and musicians. The Brampton Arts Council has been a pillar of support for our arts community. The arts council has been instrumental in recognizing the Brampton arts community. For example, this year Paulette Murphy was named the arts person of the year. Paulette is an artist, entrepreneur, architect, painter and ambassador for the arts. As well, for over 20 years the Brampton Arts Council has awarded bursaries to Brampton high school students who plan to further their education in the arts.

In recognition of this milestone, I would like to personally invite each member of this House to my Queen's Park office, where 26 Brampton artists have lent their paintings for display. Please come and see the amazing talent from my riding, which the Brampton Arts Council has supported for over 25 years.

HATE CRIMES

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): Earlier today, representatives of the Ontario branch of the Canadian Jewish Congress called on the provincial government to provide additional assistance in their efforts to prevent further outbreaks of anti-Semitic vandalism in Ontario.

Our party strongly supports their call for help. I was proud to serve in a government under Premiers Harris and Eves which held a strong commitment to community

safety. Our government took many steps on this front, including the hiring of 1,000 additional police officers.

With the increased acts of anti-Semitic crime in our province, we have to act quickly and effectively to stamp it out. It's all well and good to offer condemnatory words for these kinds of despicable acts, but we have to ensure that we transfer those words into meaningful action. That can translate into a range of initiatives: tougher laws, increased policing, electronic surveillance at vulnerable sites, and a ban on plea bargaining, to name a few.

We've got to send a clear and unequivocal message: If you engage in this kind of activity in Ontario, you will be caught and you will pay the maximum penalty possible.

The scum who commit this type of hateful, thoughtless and hurtful crime have no place in Ontario.

VAISAKHI

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): Mr Speaker, through you to the people of Ontario: In the spirit of multiculturalism, harmony, tolerance and celebration, I would like to inform all members of this House that today is the 305th anniversary of Vaisakhi, a very important day for the Sikh community.

On this day in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th and last guru, founded the Khalsa, the Sikh brotherhood. He gave Sikhs a name, a visible identity and a code of conduct and discipline. In a sense, Vaisakhi is the origin of the Sikh nation. One of the world's great religions, Sikhism emphasizes the equality of mankind, truthful living and the remembrance of God at all times.

There are over 200 million Sikhs in the world, well over 300,000 of them in Canada, and in a particularly vibrant community that I'm blessed with in my own riding of Etobicoke North.

The first Sikhs settled in this country more than a century ago and they have contributed to the growth and development of this country, which they continue to do with full force. Their vibrant cultural organizations have worked hard not only for the Sikh community itself but also for the larger Canadian community. Most recently, they celebrated the transport from India of 149 copies of their holy scriptures, the Guru Granth Sahib.

I'm sure that every member of this House and every member of this province will join me in extending congratulations and best wishes to the Sikh community on this auspicious occasion.

TAXATION

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Yesterday I had a chance to discuss Premier McGuinty's abysmal 25% approval rating in a Toronto Sun poll. I suggested one of the reasons was because he breaks promises on a regular basis. But don't take my word for it. I want to let you know what folks are saying across Ontario, particularly about Dalton McGuinty's newest plan to bring in the Dalton McGuinty meal tax.

In her column today, Christina Blizzard wrote the following on the McGuinty meal tax: "Sure, you can argue 8% on a \$4 meal is only 32 cents. Who's going to miss that? Well, a low-income senior on a fixed pension is going to feel it. A single mom picking up juice and muffins for her children is going to have to scrape deeper."

Here's an excerpt from an e-mail I received in my constituency office: "Everything keeps going up, like hydro, water, gas, taxes, but" does McGuinty "realize every time our bills go up, my husband doesn't get a raise? No, it's just less money we ourselves have for groceries, raising kids and anything else" our family needs.

Carly Epps, another hard-working Ontarian, is quoted in the Globe and Mail today as saying, "I don't think we need a sales tax on it," meaning the meals. "Why is that benefiting anyone? Who is benefiting really, besides the government.... I don't really think it's beneficial." Taxpayer pockets seem to be Dalton McGuinty's favourite side dish when his tax stomach starts grumbling.

In the business section in the Toronto Sun, Linda Leatherdale summed up the opinion of Ontarians by saying, "Only six months of government under Premier Flip Flop" McGuinty "and Ontario taxpayers are" mad as—I'll leave that to your imagination.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I believe I have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House? Government House leader.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move, pursuant to standing order 96(g), that notice be waived for ballot item number 11.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

DEFERRED VOTES

COMMITMENT TO THE FUTURE OF MEDICARE ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR L'ENGAGEMENT D'ASSURER L'AVENIR DE L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ

Deferred vote on the motion by Mr Smitherman for second reading of Bill 8, An Act to establish the Ontario Health Quality Council, to enact new legislation concerning health service accessibility and repeal the Health Care Accessibility Act, to provide for

accountability in the health service sector, and to amend the Health Insurance Act / Projet de loi 8, Loi créant le Conseil ontarien de la qualité des services de santé, édictant une nouvelle loi relative à l'accessibilité aux services de santé et abrogeant la Loi sur l'accessibilité aux services de santé, prévoyant l'imputabilité du secteur des services de santé et modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The bells rang from 1349 to 1355.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Duguid, Brad	Pupatello, Sandra
Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bentley, Christopher	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Racco, Mario G.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Fonseca, Peter	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Ramsay, David
Broten, Laurel C.	Gravelle, Michael	Rinaldi, Lou
Brown, Michael A.	Hoy, Pat	Ruprecht, Tony
Brownell, Jim	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Smitherman, George
Caplan, David	Mauvo, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	McMeekin, Ted	Van Bommel, Maria
Colle, Mike	McNeely, Phil	Watson, Jim
Craitor, Kim	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Crozier, Bruce	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wong, Tony C.
Delaney, Bob	Oraziotti, David	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dhillon, Vic	Parsons, Ernie	Zimmer, David
Di Cocco, Caroline	Peters, Steve	
Dombrowsky, Leona	Phillips, Gerry	

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise.

Nays

Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Murdoch, Bill
Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Churley, Marilyn	Marchese, Rosario	Runciman, Robert W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Martel, Shelley	Scott, Laurie
Flaherty, Jim	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wilson, Jim
Hudak, Tim	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 55; the nays are 18.

The Speaker: Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Mr Speaker, I request that Bill 8 be referred to the standing committee on justice and social policy.

The Speaker: The bill is accordingly referred.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): In the absence of the Premier, my question is to the acting Premier, whoever that is over there. There is a non-confidence motion to be debated today, and for good reason: non-confidence in the current government of Ontario.

The motto around this place used to be, "Promises made, promises kept." It is now, "Promises made, promises broken," including a fundamental promise, the promise in the Taxpayer Protection Act, the promise that Mr McGuinty signed during the campaign: "I, Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, promise that if my party is elected as the next government, I will not raise taxes or implement any new taxes without the explicit consent of Ontario voters."

This morning the Minister of Finance was asked at a press conference about this pledge. The learned Mr Benzie of the Toronto Star asked, "You said you're not going to raise income taxes. You said that categorically. The Premier said the same thing." The Minister of Finance said, "It comes from the campaign. We said during the campaign that we're not going to raise personal income taxes, and we're going to be true to our word on that." Which is true, the word of the Premier that he will not raise taxes or the word of the putative Premier that he will not raise personal income taxes?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): After that long run of hyperbole, it was interesting to see the member finally get to the end of it.

He raised the issue of non-confidence. The fact of the matter is that, notwithstanding all his claims, the people of Ontario spoke about the lack of confidence in that member and that member's party while they were the government in Ontario.

Our party looks forward to the opportunity to stand and be proud of the record we have as a government, because we're working to enhance the quality of the services that Ontarians require, and that stands in sharp contrast to them when they were in government. So with respect to the non-confidence motion the member spoke about, I'll be voting with all the confidence in the world in the work we're doing in this government, working hard on behalf of the people of Ontario.

1400

Mr Flaherty: We did not hear whether the Premier's promise applies or the Minister of Finance's promise applies. Perhaps they can answer when they're in the House.

Taxing and spending is what this government is all about. Another promise was to hold the line on taxes and to balance the budget. Now we see spending in excess of \$2.4 billion by that side in less than six months—new spending of \$2.4 billion—and not only that, but this morning an announcement of another \$500 million, half a billion dollars. Now they're up to \$3 billion. How are they going to pay for it? They're going to pay for it with a soup-and-salad tax to grab \$200 million from the lowest-wage earners in this province. Can you assure me, acting Premier, that you will not finance your spending spree on the backs of the lowest-wage earners in Ontario?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I find it amazing that the honourable member stands and talks about promises made and promises kept, and then likes to talk about the foundation of that government and their last budget in this province. Is that member prepared to stand in his

place and say that the promises made in that budget were kept? Since the veil has been lifted, the people of Ontario now actually know of the activities of that party when they were the government of this province. Today our Premier is standing with leaders from labour and business, and they are laying out, on behalf of the province, an ambitious plan to underscore the viability and vitality of the economy in Ontario by investing in the automotive sector, something this party and this government are indeed very proud of.

Mr Flaherty: That was a loud response, but uninformative and not responsive to the question.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

Mr Flaherty: The people of Ontario still want to know whether you're going to finance your spending spree on the backs of the lowest-income earners in the province with a soup-and-salad tax.

The acting Premier is also the Minister of Health. Maybe he can help us with this logic: You say you're going to justify this soup-and-salad tax on the basis of healthy eating. Would the Minister of Health explain to the people of Ontario why it is unhealthy to eat soup and salad, and why they should be taxed for the privilege?

Hon Mr Smitherman: Continuing the theme, that party, when they were the government, chose to have a budget at Magna. Today we stand with the automotive leadership in this province—labour and business—making a commitment to investments in the automotive sector, because we know that those provide great jobs for the people of Ontario.

With respect to the honourable member's question about healthy eating, I would encourage the honourable member to take up the advice I offer, which is the theme I have for myself: continuous improvement. I think we all should look for healthier eating opportunities every chance we can.

The Speaker: New question, the member for Oak Ridges.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Could I have a page, please? I'd like to deliver this to the acting Premier, Mr Smitherman. It's not a prop. I want to make very clear that what I have just sent to the Minister of Health is a very nutritious lunch I bought for him that cost \$3.95. It's a falafel and salad, a vegetarian meal that will be very good for the Minister of Health.

When I think of that tasty lunch prepared by hard-working entrepreneurs, I want to ask a simple question of the Minister of Health: What is wrong with buying a meal like that, and will the minister stand in his place today and admit to Ontarians that his healthy plan for Ontarians has nothing at all to do with health but is a tax grab from the people of Ontario?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to stand in my place today and talk about our government's commitment. The essential element of our government's commitment with respect to health is healthier Ontarians in a healthier Ontario. We want Ontarians to be the healthiest Canadians. As a result of that, our government believes we should be encouraging peo-

ple to choose healthier options. With respect to all the speculation the member is involved in with respect to exemptions on fast food, these are a figment of the imagination of people who are out there talking about them. I have not speculated around these and I will not do so today.

Mr Klees: Whether the minister wants to speculate or not, it was not the restaurant and hotel association that floated this trial balloon. It is in fact the government that has been proposing that this take place. Only Mr Sorbara and Mr Smitherman and the Premier would suggest that to tax this kind of meal, which is a vegetarian meal and has absolutely nothing to do with fat, has nothing to do with big business, could be pawned off on the people of Ontario as the minister's health plan for Ontario. Why doesn't he at least stand in his place today and admit to the people of Ontario that it has nothing to do with health, that it has everything to do with scraping the bottom of the barrel and picking the pockets of ordinary, hard-working Ontarians? Why don't you just admit that?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I find it interesting that the member is from a party that imposed upon the poorest Ontarians a 22% cut in their welfare rates, is a member of a party that had a minister of the day who gave advice to people about how to shop for dented tuna cans, and would be offering advice about this government's initiatives to deal with the challenges that those most vulnerable in our society are facing. We have taken important steps. I want to make it absolutely clear that when I spoke last Thursday to the Empire Club, I conditioned the argument to Ontarians about taking personal choice and personal responsibility in eating healthier. I did not speculate about any tax.

Mr Klees: Well, in that case, we trust the Minister of Health has been lobbying his Finance Minister not to go through with this ridiculous idea. What this government fails to understand is that by floating trial balloons like this, there are true consequences. There are consequences for investors, for job creators and for the kind of investment confidence that people will have.

I want to read to the minister a letter from a constituent. "The fact of the matter is that the food service industry experience shows that every 1% increase in sales tax results in more than 1% drop in sales. The significant decrease in sales following elimination of the exemption will result in many industry job losses, primarily for youth." Will the minister at least confirm for us today that when this tax grab takes place, it won't be done under the auspices of a health plan proposed by this minister?

Hon Mr Smitherman: Last Thursday I made a speech to the Empire Club. I recommend it to the member. It spoke about many items, issues this government plans to initiate to enhance the quality of life of Ontarians by asking them to be partners in improving their own health. We think it's critically important in our society to make mention of the fact that some foods are better than others. I stand as someone who has been very taken to telling the personal story, because in my life I haven't always made those choices appropriately.

What I can confirm to the honourable member is that the Minister of Finance is responsible for bringing in a budget in this province and he will do so in a fashion consistent with this party's values. He will not do so in a fashion like that party did, out of this place, and frankly with numbers that turned out to be out of this world.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is again to the acting Premier. Howard Hampton, our leader, is in Hamilton today at Rankin's restaurant, a place that specializes in low-cost meals. He is there to start our province-wide petition against your outrageous 8% soup-and-salad tax. Minister, those who order the popular specials at Rankin's restaurant, the \$3.99 daily specials, are just a few of the 1.5 million people who order something under \$4 at restaurants in this province every day. Statistics Canada tells us that most people, the poorest people spend 21% of their income on meals away from home, higher than higher-income people.

My question to you is quite simple: This is an attack on millions of low- and moderate-income Ontarians and it has nothing to do with obesity. Will you tell us today that you will not impose this unfair tax for meals under \$4?

1410

Hon Mr Smitherman: The member, in his question, mentions low-income Ontarians, and I'm pleased to report to this House that this government, in fairly short order, has taken many significant steps to enhance the quality of life for people in Ontario. We've raised the minimum wage. We've reduced work hours legislation. We've brought in a rent bank. We are getting back in the business of making investments in affordable housing. My colleague has brought in a tuition freeze. And the fact of the matter is that, after a very short time in government, this government is standing out in contrast to that government on our commitment to enhance the quality of life for the poorest in our province.

Mr Prue: The question was quite simple. The question is, yes or no? Are you intending to impose this tax? Yes or no? That's the question and that's all we want to hear today. We don't want waffling, we don't want going all over the place. Just answer the question. People across Ontario want to know.

Hon Mr Smitherman: If the member were listening carefully, he'd know that I said earlier that it is not the responsibility of this minister to speculate on taxation matters. It is the responsibility of the Minister of Finance to present to the people of the province of Ontario a budget that outlines the government's commitments and priorities, and the Minister of Finance will do that.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I didn't get anywhere with that question. Let's try a different minister. This is a question to the Minister of Energy. Mr Minister, tomorrow you'll be outlining your new plan on the electricity sector and how it will run. No doubt, you

will spin all of that to say that you're helping consumers, but unless you close the spot market, we are afraid that consumers will not be helped but will continue to be zapped by rising hydro rates.

My question to you is very simple: Because the rates have gone up so far so fast because of the spot market, will you do the right thing and protect consumers from profiteers by closing the hydro spot market?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I will be outlining our plans tomorrow. Prices did go up 40% when the NDP were in office, but he must have missed the last 18 months. The previous government imposed a price cap that cost the treasury \$1.7 billion, led to no new supply, and failed to address the mess that was left by his government when they left office.

So we're taking a prudent approach to making sure that small consumers have a predictable source of supply, predictable pricing, and I'll be outlining the details of that tomorrow.

Mr Prue: Again, I'm not getting much of an answer, so I'm going to ask it in very simple terms. The consumers have been zapped over the last number of years. They have been zapped by 32% because of the spot market. Are you going to get rid of the spot market? Are you going to protect consumers, or are you going to allow costs to escalate for all things dealing with hydro? Very simple.

Hon Mr Duncan: What I can tell you is that for any party to pursue the policy that was pursued either by that party or the other party will result in consumers being zapped even more. We're going to take responsible action—we've already begun to do that—to address the very serious questions.

I am very proud of the initiatives that Premier McGuinty has undertaken in conservation. Contrast that with the NDP. We've invested a quarter of a billion dollars in conservation within four weeks of taking office. They cancelled all conservation initiatives when they were the government of Ontario.

Let's talk about hydroelectric power. They cancelled the Conawapa deal in 1992. Had that deal been in place, we would not be in the mess we're in today. There was a short-sighted government that left an awful mess. The next government left an awful mess. The McGuinty Liberal government is going clean up the mess of those 15 lost and painful years.

TAXATION

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): To the Acting Premier: During the election campaign, the Liberals had no problem making campaign promises. In fact, you had so many campaign promises you had five different platforms. Could you direct me on what page of what platform you promised to impose the new McGuinty meal tax?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I find it interesting that that member,

suffering from amnesia, apparently, likes to forget the role they played in creating financial conditions in this province. They brought in a budget at Magna where the numbers might as well have been written on a white-board, because they bore very little resemblance to reality.

I'm proud to say that we have taken office and we have taken responsibility for the affairs of the government of Ontario, and in a broad variety of areas directly related to our platform we've been able to move forward and fulfill commitments, on some of which I'll be pleased to respond to the member in supplementary.

Mr Hudak: If I were the member across, part of the McGuinty government that seems to have forgotten any campaign promises, I wouldn't be talking about amnesia. In fact, the answer to my question, which the member dodged in a bunch of bluster, is "No page." There's no page; there's no reference to the McGuinty meal tax. It was never mentioned. You want to know why? Because it's a bad idea. Taxpayers reject it. Taxpayers are angry about it.

Acting Premier, the McGuinty government has brought forward all kinds of wacky ideas. You brought forward tolling Highway 69. You brought forward mandatory retesting of all drivers in the province. After letting them twist in the wind, you finally shot down those trial balloons.

You're twisting in the wind once again. Will you do the right thing and put this sick dog of an idea to rest? Will you just say no to the McGuinty meal tax?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I know the honourable member wants me to speculate with him, but I will not. Instead, what I prefer to do is talk about some of the things our government has already done. With respect to children's services, we've enhanced the support for children with autism. On community and social services, we repealed the lifetime ban on welfare. My colleague has been very active on the democratic renewal front. In education, we invested \$112 million in literacy and numeracy. In the environment, we have moved to enhance the number of water inspectors.

My point very simply is this, Mr Speaker: The honourable member likes to make wild assertions about our campaign commitments. Here's the commitment that I make to the honourable member: If he continues to sit in his place and watch this government and its acts, I'm sure that he will see all of the progress that we're making on the commitments we took to the people of the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question. The member for Ottawa-Orléans.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

FORMATION PAR APPRENTISSAGE

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): Thank you, Mr Speaker. The supplementary will be asked by the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan.

Ma question est pour la ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités. Hier, vous vous êtes associée au premier ministre pour l'annonce exceptionnelle concernant les programmes d'apprentissage dans la province. Notre gouvernement a annoncé la somme de 18 \$ millions pour l'amélioration de ces programmes dont bénéficieront plus de 28 000 étudiants. Nous savons tous qu'une économie forte et prospère dépend d'une main-d'oeuvre hautement qualifiée. Je sais que cette annonce est une bonne nouvelle pour les résidents de ma circonscription à Ottawa-Orléans et un bienfait certain pour l'économie locale.

Madame la Ministre, quelles seront, sur la communauté d'Ottawa, les incidences et les retombées de ces mesures?

Hon Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): Yesterday I was very pleased to stand beside the Premier at Centennial College as we announced a program of apprenticeship supports that will benefit programs in every single one of our public colleges across the province. I'd like to take this opportunity also to thank all of those colleges for submitting proposals for how they would like this money to be applied to their programs. We announced \$18 million, and of that amount, La Cité collégiale will get almost \$180,000 for the electrician and general machinist programs. Algonquin will get over \$1 million for programs there. That will include auto body repair, e-learning and several other apprenticeship programs.

1420

Mr Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My community of Thunder Bay-Atikokan also appreciates the importance of quality apprenticeship programs. Confederation College, located in Thunder Bay, serves a population of 230,000 spread over 215,000 square miles. We need skilled workers to work in our pulp and paper mills and manufacturing plants. It is important for northern residents to have access to training and educational opportunities within their home communities.

Minister, can you tell me and my community what this announcement means for Thunder Bay?

Hon Mrs Chambers: I'm very happy to say that Confederation College in Thunder Bay will get almost \$350,000 for their programs in carpentry, pulp and paper and motive power trades, and almost \$275,000 for a variety of other trades, including automotive service technician, brick and stone mason and general carpenter, just to name a few.

INTEREST RATES

Mr. Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. Will you be the minister who sets the interest rates for Ontario savings bonds to be issued this spring?

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The Minister of Finance, of course, will be dealing with that issue.

Mr Flaherty: The whole issue is that the securities area has been designated by the Premier to go to the Chair of Management Board. The setting of interest rates for Ontario savings bonds is one of the fundamental acts of the government each year in the securities industry. The whole idea is to maintain the confidence of the securities industry, despite the fact that the current Minister of Finance is the former chair of the audit committee of a company that's being investigated by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, by the Ontario Securities Commission and by the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency.

Would the Chair of Management Board please advise whether he is prepared to go back to the Integrity Commissioner and raise the issue, which has not been raised with the Integrity Commissioner, about which minister should set the interest rates for Ontario savings bonds this year?

Hon Mr Phillips: I think the public should recognize that the Integrity Commissioner has looked at this matter in considerable detail. He has determined that Minister Sorbara, at every step of the way, made the right decisions. He concludes, among other things, in this very extensive note, having examined all this, "I remain of the view that the steps you took on February 25, 2004, were sufficient."

I repeat: The Integrity Commissioner, a respected former judge, looked at this matter in detail, determined that Minister Sorbara made exactly the right decisions at every step of the way and concluded in his report: "I remain of the view that the steps you took on February 25, 2004, were sufficient." I believe that answers the matter.

WORKPLACE SAFETY FOR STUDENTS

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): My question is for the Minister of Labour. With summer fast approaching, Ontario students are completing their studies and are out looking for summer jobs. Unfortunately, each year a number of students are injured while working at summer jobs. I know from personal experience that this is a serious problem—my own daughter actually broke her pelvis on a summer job. What is the Ministry of Labour doing to ensure that young workers are safe on their summer jobs?

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): The member for Guelph-Wellington raises a very important point. Our government is determined to make sure all workplaces are as healthy and safe as they possibly can be. Of particular concern is the issue of young workers. In the year 2002, there were almost 14,000 lost-time injuries involving young workers, so there is an enormous problem.

To address the problem, we have to address young worker concerns and employer concerns, and we have to work as a government with a comprehensive plan. With respect to the information that young workers themselves can acquire, I would make reference to several places,

because it's important that young workers have the information they need to ask the right questions. For example, they can access the WorkSmart Ontario Web site to obtain information and find sources for further information before they actually go to the Web site. We're pleased to report that occupational health and safety is already part of the educational curriculum that has been developed through the Ministry of Education and is supported by labour groups. And finally, at this time of year we have the WSIB's spring young worker awareness campaign to make them aware of the issues.

Mrs Sandals: I'm pleased to hear that your ministry is working so hard with various groups to try and make students aware. I was quite involved in working with the Ministry of Education around health and safety issues in my former role. Can you tell me a little bit more about where students get this information and about what the role of employers is, because they're the other piece in this picture?

Hon Mr Bentley: The member for Guelph-Wellington once again hits on a very important point. I've outlined the areas where the students can find the information, but the employers are a crucially important part of this.

Several weeks ago, I announced the minister's health and safety action groups. We have already had meetings with construction, manufacturing and health groups, bringing together front-line expertise from both labour and management. One of the common themes that is emerging is that employers need to do a better job of making sure that young, entry-level workers have the training they need in order to be able to keep themselves safe on the work site, because it's agreed by everyone that a healthy workplace is the most productive workplace. I'm taking this advice and hope to have initiatives in the very near future to address this very important point.

WATER QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Your government promised to protect the environment and public health, but you're hammering local communities with the bill. In Walkerton, for instance, the Ontario Clean Water Agency is forcing the municipality to pay 60% more than they had agreed to. They had to clean out their reserve fund to pay. Municipalities and individual property owners are getting hit with high bills all over Ontario. Trailer parks and community centres are being forced to shut down. When are you going to live up to your responsibilities and pay for the costs of clean water, as promised?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): It's a very important question. I know that many members in this House are hearing from representatives in their communities around the challenges in providing clean and safe drinking water to the people who live in their communities.

This government, as we've said many times during the campaign and since we formed government, is committed to implementing all of the O'Connor recommendations. There is a part of that report that very clearly indicates that when it comes to providing safe and clean drinking water within communities, that responsibility falls to the local communities. As well, we have in Ontario the Safe Drinking Water Act that was passed in the Legislature and lays out a structure for full cost recovery for those municipalities to provide safe drinking water to their residents.

Ms Churley: That is totally unacceptable. The mayor of Walkerton says a typical water bill used to be about \$15 a month. Now it's more like \$75 a month and many pay over \$100. That's on top of higher hydro rates, insurance rates and so on. They can't afford it. It's happening all over the province. Two resident groups representing Waldemar and Marsville in East Garafraxa township met with me about their huge water bills. They can't afford to pay them—pure and simple. These communities need your help. I'm asking you again: will you meet with representatives from these communities, because they've been trying to meet with you or representatives from your government to no avail; and will you help these communities pay for their water bills, because they cannot afford it?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: I have met with the mayor of Walkerton, and I am very aware of the challenges they have. Some of the challenges they have right now are short-term, because they are in a transition, and they are looking to upgrade their system.

With respect to other municipalities in this province, the Premier of the province has recognized that we have an infrastructure deficit in Ontario. To that end he has created the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, which will assist municipalities to meet these needs to provide clean water to the residents in communities across the province.

1430

BORDER SECURITY

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I have a question for the Acting Premier. Yesterday I was shocked by Premier McGuinty's seeming indifference to the re-entry into Ontario of avowed supporters of Al-Qaeda, the Khadr family. In response to media questions the Premier in effect said, "It's not our problem."

The 9/11 commission in the United States is making it clear that that attack was preventable. In the United States the alarm was sounded, but no one listened. In Ontario, it appears Premier McGuinty just doesn't get it. This is our problem. The vast majority of law enforcement is provincial, and I ask the minister, what steps are being taken when known terrorist sympathizers are on our doorstep?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I listened to the exchange yesterday too, and what shocked me was that that member, in

questioning the Minister of Community Safety, seemed to suggest that minister was walking in his shadow. What I would say is that the member yesterday defended himself well and put forward this government's position. This government's position is that we continue to fulfill our responsibility to work with the federal government, to participate with the federal minister, as the Minister of Community Safety said yesterday.

We all believe that what comes with Canadian citizenship are the fundamental responsibilities and obligations of being a great Canadian, and we believe this is something that all members in all Houses in all Parliaments across our country agree with. For that member to try and find partisan advantage and disagreement where there isn't any I think is inappropriate.

Mr Runciman: That's nothing short of a disgusting response that should concern every thoughtful Ontarian. Today the chief of police—

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government Mr Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Surely the word "disgusting" can't be parliamentary language.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. We're getting quite emotional about this issue. I'd ask members to temper their language a bit and let us hear the question and the response. Thank you.

Mr Runciman: Today Toronto Police Chief Fantino has expressed his concern about the vulnerability of Toronto to a terrorist attack. We have prominent supporters of Al-Qaeda plopped on our doorstep and all we're getting from this Liberal government is indifference and smug arrogance, which we heard again here today.

Minister, we know the Khadr's are famous for losing passports. Can you tell us if your officials have looked into whether or not they also have a history of losing provincial documents like health cards and drivers' licenses? Please, be responsible for a change and give us an answer.

The Speaker: Order. I want to warn the members that the line of questioning seems to be on a different level of government and I just wanted to—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I just wanted to caution you, in addressing those questions, to make sure it's in the direction of—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. That it's within provincial jurisdiction. Minister.

Hon Mr Smitherman: I guess what we have some struggle with on this side is that that member, when he was part of a government, let an Al-Qaeda sleeper cell disappear into magic, into thin air. He acknowledges it himself, and today he's back on high ground. Our government—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Smitherman: We take the health and safety of Ontarians very seriously. The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services in his answer yesterday

indicated very clearly that not only has he been working closely with federal officials, but also that he enjoys a very strong relationship with the chief of police in the city of Toronto. To suggest that this government is not involved in those kinds of matters is just plain wrong. The fact is that we will continue to be vigilant on behalf of the people of Ontario, to work in the interests of their health and safety.

LUMBER INDUSTRY

Mr David Oraziatti (Sault Ste Marie): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, yesterday the World Trade Organization announced that it would uphold the existing US lumber duties. I believe it's crucial for the public to know that our government will continue to fight for the interests of the softwood lumber industry in this province. Can you elaborate on the impact that this decision will have on the lumber industry of the province of Ontario?

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): I very much appreciate the question coming from the member for Sault Ste Marie. I know he, along with other northern colleagues in the Legislature, as well as all other members, understand that this particular trade dispute with the United States has impacted over 39 communities across northern Ontario by putting 4,000 people out of work. It is a top priority of this government and my ministry to work with the federal government in trying to resolve this.

While this WTO ruling is disappointing, we are looking forward to the NAFTA panel ruling coming at the end of this month. That panel, we are optimistically feeling, will rule there has been no injury proven by the United States. If that decision comes down that way, then the tariff duties would be returned to our companies.

Mr Oraziatti: Minister, I'm pleased that we are standing firm on our position with respect to softwood lumber duties.

As northern Ontario's economy and that of Ontario as a whole depend greatly on our softwood lumber industry, could you tell us what you are doing to ensure Ontario's softwood industry will get a fair deal?

Hon Mr Ramsay: I have been working with my colleagues across the country, especially with my federal colleague Jim Peterson, the Minister of International Trade at the federal level, who is in charge of this file. We are in constant contact and also in contact with the United States. While there is a litigation route going on at this time, we feel that in the end the only way to resolve this is going to be through negotiation.

I think it's wise and prudent right now to wait to see what the NAFTA panel rules at the end of this month. Depending on that ruling, we need to be seriously looking at some negotiation, not accepting the deal the Americans put forward at the beginning of December but looking at some sort of negotiated settlement that leads us very quickly to free trade, because that's what we all want in this province.

REPORTING OF GUNSHOT WOUNDS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today as well is to the Acting Premier. Minister, just yesterday I asked your colleague Minister Kwinter when he would bring forth to this House the legislation he promised last December to make reporting of gunshot wounds mandatory. I report he promised separate legislation, not Bill 31.

I must say you all seemed a little content and confused in the feeble manner in which you, Minister Kwinter and the Attorney General are all pointing at each other as to who should take the lead on mandatory reporting of gunshot wounds. Now you're all pointing and saying that Bill 31 seems to be the answer. Minister, will you say here today that Minister Kwinter's promised legislation for mandatory reporting of gunshot wounds will be forthcoming and not just one more broken Liberal promise?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): From the party that once promised not to close hospitals in this province, that was very interesting.

I would say very clearly to the honourable member that the Minister of Community Safety will introduce a piece of legislation this spring. In order for the bill to withstand a constitutional challenge, we're going to make sure that we get the bill right in the first place, and if that takes a tiny bit of extra time, we feel that's a prudent step to take. But I reaffirm the commitment, which is that the Minister of Community Safety will introduce a bill this spring.

1440

Mr Dunlop: Minister, I appreciate your answer. Before you start talking to us and reporting to us on health care, maybe you should learn your own file on health care spending.

Minister, you know that the Ontario Medical Association has already endorsed mandatory reporting. By the way, the Toronto Star has, and so has the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. In 2002, emergency physicians in this province were asked in a survey, "Do you feel there should be mandatory reporting of gunshot wounds, intentional or accidental, by ER physicians?" Over 75% of the physicians surveyed said yes to that question.

So what are we waiting for? What's more important to you: the rights of criminals, or the safety of our communities? Minister, we need the Minister of Community Safety to finally take some action and not just keep warming his seat over there.

Hon Mr Smitherman: Thank you very much for that very generous question, Mr Speaker.

I want to say, in response to the honourable member, just a few things. Firstly, the Minister of Community Safety indicated yesterday that he would be in a position to meet with the Ontario Medical Association this Friday. I've undertaken conversations and am personally supportive of mandatory gunshot reporting. I've made that clear. I reaffirm the commitment I made a moment ago.

I would just remind the member that he stands up and asks a rather sharp question, but while he was a member of the government the then Minister of Health, Tony Clement, vetoed such an initiative.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a question for the Chair of Management Board. Last week, the minister announced that our government will aggressively conserve energy in our own buildings and that we will reduce electricity consumption by 10% by 2007. This commitment represents 62 million kilowatt hours of energy every year. Your four-point plan dealing with various projects, such as 24 lighting retrofit projects and 19 building automation projects, would see annual savings of 24 million kilowatt hours. How does your ministry expect to attain the other 38 million kilowatt hours needed to attain the full 10%?

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I appreciate the question from the member for Davenport.

I think all of us share the responsibility of making sure this happens. The 62 million kilowatt hours is a 10% reduction, and if we are going to show leadership in this province I think the people of Ontario will want to see that we, as members of the Legislature, are following through on our own responsibility.

We did announce last week some steps that would reduce electricity use by about 40% of our target. We still have about another 60% to go. We're counting on our public servants to help us with that conservation, but frankly, we're also going to have to make some investments. The announcement last week was for investments over the next 12 months to reduce our consumption by that 40% of our target. We are going to have to make investments over the following two years.

What we've been doing is making sure we set the highest possible priority on energy-saving projects as we look at investing scarce resources in retrofitting our buildings. We've identified specific projects over the next three years that will get us to that target. We've already committed to the projects for the next 12 months that will see us get 40% of the way there. In the following two years, we'll hit the remaining 60%.

Mr Ruprecht: Minister, that's really good news, but let me ask you this question. A few weeks ago, my colleague from Peterborough—you know our colleague from Peterborough—asked you why so many lights were on at night. You responded that they shouldn't be. However, as you walk around the precinct at night you can still see the lights on. In fact, some buildings look like lit-up Christmas trees. Minister, can you explain to the House what your ministry is doing to make sure that these lights are not on when they shouldn't be on?

Hon Mr Phillips: To respond to the member for Davenport, I repeat what I said earlier: We all have a responsibility to save electricity, including getting the lights turned out at night. I would just say that we have a plan that every night our security organization goes

through the buildings to get the lights turned out. I would tell the public that we will complete, at the end of April, some projects at 880 Bay and 25 Grosvenor to automatically turn them off. Just last night, as a matter of fact, we completed a project in the Ferguson Block to automate some additional lights being turned off. The Deputy Minister of Finance told me the other day that the security guard came into his office three times when he was working late at night, wondering why the lights were out.

I would just say to the member for Davenport, we all have a responsibility here. We are trying to automate our buildings so they're turned off automatically, but any of us—when we see lights that are on, let's get them off. We're not going to solve this by ourselves. Collectively we have that responsibility and I'm looking for your support. I would say once again to the public, give us your ideas. Go to our Web site and let us know if we can do better.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, yesterday I asked the Premier the question I'm about to ask you and he wasn't very helpful. That's why I wanted to ask you this question: You announced money for the apprenticeship enhancement fund yesterday. We're not talking about the innovation fund or the other fund, the pre-apprenticeship program. We're talking about, specifically, the apprenticeship enhancement fund. Can you tell me, are you spending less or more on this fund than the previous Conservative government?

Hon Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'm happy to respond to the question from the member from Trinity-Spadina. We're talking about a \$10-million budget. Yesterday we announced \$9.3 million in new programs. The remaining \$700,000 was already spent earlier in the year, out of this budget. So the entire \$10 million has been spent.

Mr Marchese: I'm glad to hear that, because it wasn't entirely clear from the answer of the Premier. Do you think this fund is adequate spending on capital projects or not? What do you think?

Hon Mrs Chambers: As I indicated in my earlier response to another question on this subject, each project was submitted by the colleges across the province. They know what their constituents need, and I'm really pleased with the submissions that we have received. Every year, if there are funds continuing to do this, I will again look forward to their submissions. I think we've done a really good job as a community, as a system of colleges, to deal with the apprenticeship agenda.

LANDFILL

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): To the Minister of the Environment, in British Columbia

they are destroying 80% of their chickens because of avian flu, and many carcasses are being landfilled. In Ontario, Minister, people worry that you have no plan if Toronto's garbage were to be stopped at the Michigan border. If bird flu landfill was required in Ontario, what would you do, Minister?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): Our government is very proud of our most recent initiative to review the Environmental Assessment Act so that we can actually expedite the process to, in a very environmentally safe way, establish more landfills in the province of Ontario. I believe that the actions our government is taking at the present time are consistent with what stakeholders, municipalities, environment interests, as well as industry interests, have asked for. They asked you for it when you were in government. You ignored them. You gutted the Environmental Assessment Act. Now we have a situation in Ontario where there is a need to look for a better way to site landfills in the province of Ontario, and we're going to address that.

1450

Mr Barrett: You've just said, and your leader has said, that Ontario needs more landfills, and that's today. Even without a potential closure of the Michigan border, even without a potential need for an avian flu landfill, for example, whose backyard are you looking at for these new landfills you just talked about?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: The initiative that we have presented to this Legislature and that we have explained will provide a framework so that we have stakeholder partners who have had the opportunity to know first-hand the effect that the tinkering of your government had on the Environmental Assessment Act and the reason why it takes between eight and 12 years to site a landfill in the province. That is not acceptable.

We are looking to improve the process. We are going to involve the appropriate people who will actually be able to provide us with the kind of information and input that we need to move forward and site landfills in a timely and environmentally friendly way.

WATER QUALITY

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Coming from a rural riding like I do, I know what value you place on our community halls. Meeting the new regulation 170 has very much placed a financial hardship on them. In order for those community halls to continue operating, they have brought these concerns forward to me, and I take this opportunity to address the question to our minister. Minister, no one in this government is questioning the importance of public health by ensuring that we have safe water to drink, but what will your ministry do to address the challenges that our rural communities will face in meeting the new regulation?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I very much appreciate the points that have been brought by the honourable member, who obviously is

very ably advocating rural issues to this Legislature. I'm happy to report that at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association conference that was held, I met with 42 municipalities. Many of those municipalities identified for me the problem they have with regulation 170.

Interjection.

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: I find it interesting that the former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment is crowing over there. I would suggest that while he was at the table when this regulation was written, he obviously did nothing to bring those folks to answer as to why this regulation is not going to work well in rural Ontario. I have asked staff at the Ministry of the Environment to review regulation 170 and provide me with options so that we can make it more workable for rural communities.

Mrs Mitchell: I would be very pleased to inform my constituents in my riding. The riding that I represent is a very rural riding, and I know that my fellow members sitting across the way from me also represent rural ridings. I'm sure that if any of them had the opportunity to view how things were portrayed today and the time you took to wait to hear the answer to the question, which is very important—

Interjections.

Mrs Mitchell: Minister, I know that you will help our rural communities in order to meet these new standards. I would like to ask the minister to update the members on the status of the government's work today.

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: The Ministry of the Environment is intent on assisting municipalities to meet our commitment and their commitment, their desire, to ensure that people in their communities have safe water to drink. That is a priority for this government. We are intent on providing the tools that will do that.

Since we formed government, we have established two committees to provide us with advice and direction: a technical experts committee and an implementation committee on how to further implement the Walkerton inquiry recommendations.

I would like to say that today ends a 60-day period during which the public has had an opportunity to review the source protection initiative and provide us with input.

Again, I remind everyone in this House that the Premier has identified the infrastructure deficit in the province. He has established the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal to work with municipalities to assist them to meet this very important need.

RETROACTIVE LEGISLATION

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question. The member for Whitby-Ajax.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I want to hear the member for Whitby-Ajax's question and I will also hear his supplementary.

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): My question is for the Attorney General. Your duty, as you know, is greater

than your political duty in terms of your obligations as chief law officer of the crown. I suggest there is a worrisome trend toward retroactivity in legislation that is being brought before this House.

As you know, in the rule of law we have a presumption against retroactivity; that is, people are entitled to know what the law is when they act. They ought to be able to plan their affairs and know what the law is. One example we saw in this House a bill in October or November repealing the equity in education tax credit, something that people planned for for an entire year last year. Most recently we had Bill 49, which is retroactive in effect as well.

I ask the Attorney General whether he has exercised his duty to advise the government against retroactive legislation.

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): Yes, I have.

Mr Flaherty: With respect to Bill 49 in particular—the subject matter is less important than the principle as we look forward to several years of legislation. Here we have an environmental assessment, someone who followed the rules, went through all the assessment, there was a conclusion in 1998, which is proposed to be repealed by the legislation. Not only that, but there's the repeal of rights to damages and compensation of various types—again, retroactively in this same bill.

My question to the Attorney General is, what advice was given to the government with respect to retroactivity in Bill 49 and the other bills that have come before this House that are retroactive in effect?

Hon Mr Bryant: The member is right. It is important when bills are introduced that they in fact withstand constitutional scrutiny. I can assure the member that we made sure that every bill that has been introduced by this government meets that standard and then some. That's consistent with the Ministry of the Attorney General Act, which the member is very familiar with, and consistent with the constitution. We will continue to introduce legislation that is consistent with the rule of law.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have a petition entitled "Hands Off Our Food." It has the subtitle "Stop 8% Meal Tax."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has plans to tax meals under \$4, ultimately raising taxes for working families, despite the campaign promise of, 'I won't cut your taxes, but I won't raise them either';

"Whereas the food industry expects a drop in sales if the PST exemption is lifted, leading to job losses, primarily for youth;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals support working Ontario families and youth through maintaining the provincial sales tax exemption on meals under \$4."

I affix my signature to this petition.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): "Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario's professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry or re-entry of skilled workers and" professionally trained people "outside Canada into the Canadian workforce."

I sign my name to this petition with pride.

1500

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government was elected after promising in their election platform that they were committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors but are now considering delisting drugs and imposing user fees on seniors; and

"Whereas prescription drugs are not covered under the Canada Health Act unless dispensed in a hospital; and

"Whereas the federal Liberal government refuses to acknowledge this as a necessary health service despite the Romanow report's strong support for a national drug program;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately ... commit to end plans for the delisting of drugs for coverage under the Ontario drug benefit program;

"To immediately commit to ending plans to implement higher user fees for vulnerable seniors and to improve the Ontario drug benefit plan so they can obtain necessary medications; and

"To instruct Premier" Dalton "McGuinty to demand more health care funding from Ottawa instead of demanding more funding from seniors."

NATIONAL CHILD TAX BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly. It reads as follows:

"Whereas one in five children in Ontario live in poverty;

"Whereas part of the national child tax benefit program the federal government gives as a supplement to low-income families across this country to begin" addressing "child poverty;

"Whereas the money up to approximately \$100 a month per child is meant to give our poorest and most vulnerable children a better chance in life;

"Whereas in Ontario the ... government ... deducts the child benefit supplement dollar for dollar from those living on social assistance;

"Whereas this is leaving our province's neediest children without extra money they desperately need to begin to climb out of poverty;

"Whereas all children are entitled to a fair chance at life;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned," call on "the provincial government of Ontario stop the claw back of the national child tax benefit supplement and ensure this federal money reaches all low-income families in Ontario."

These signed petitions were sent to me by the Housing Help Centre in Kingston. I agree with the petitioners. I've affixed my signature to this.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly on behalf of my riding of Niagara Falls.

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario's professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry or re-entry of skilled workers and" professionally trained people "outside Canada into the Canadian workforce."

I'm pleased to attach my signature to this petition.

TAXATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): This petition has a title; it's called "The Death of the Happy Meal."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Dalton McGuinty government has indicated that it may impose retail sales tax on the purchase of meals costing less than \$4; and

"Whereas raising the price of affordable meals targets consumers least able to afford higher costs, including workers who earn their living on the road, students, and working Ontario families who need the convenience of consuming some of their meals outside the home; and

"Whereas eliminating the \$4 RTS will have a devastating impact on the food service industry, resulting in reduced sales and lost jobs; and

"Whereas this new tax will target outlets such as school" and classes, pizza day, "and hospital cafeterias, as well as small business and quick service restaurants;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario preserve food service jobs and lighten the tax burden of working Ontario families by maintaining the RTS exemption on affordable meals consumed outside the home."

I'm pleased to support this in support of all those children and families that—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The member for Davenport.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I know this petition will upset the members of opposition, but I have to read it anyway.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario"—it's addressed to you as well, Mr Speaker.

"Whereas the parliamentary tradition in Ontario of presenting annual budgets in the House of the Legislative Assembly has existed for decades; and

"Whereas the previous government in 2003 showed disrespect for our public institutions and the people of Ontario by presenting a budget inside a private, for-profit auto parts factory; and

"Whereas the previous Speaker of the Legislative Assembly condemned the actions of his own party's government;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to uphold parliamentary tradition and hold a public presentation and debate of the 2004 budget, and every budget thereafter, by our publicly elected members of Parliament inside the Legislative chamber."

Since I totally agree, I'm happy to sign my name to it.

SEWAGE SLUDGE

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we the residents of Wasaga Beach wish to bring forth our concerns regarding the transfer of approximately 5,700 tonnes of 14-year-old sludge, which contains metals, from the North Simcoe transfer station to our recently closed landfill site. To date, there are no EBR requirements for hauled sewage. Due to this, and the geography of the Wasaga Beach site being so close to the longest fresh water beach in the world, and other sensitive areas, there exists a threat to the environment and the public's health. This questionable product should be moved to a desolate location. Once damaged, the environment and people cannot be replaced;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to stop the sludge from being transferred to Wasaga Beach."

I have signed this.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of seniors from Black Creek Leisure Homes, like the Farrellys and Allan Strickland. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas during the election campaign the Dalton McGuinty Liberals said they would improve the Ontario drug benefit program, but now are considering delisting drugs and imposing higher user fees; and

"Whereas the Liberal government has increased costs to seniors by taking away the seniors' property tax rebate, and increased the price of hydro;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should keep their campaign promise to improve the Ontario drug benefit program and abandon their plan to delist drugs or increase seniors' drug fees."

In support I affix my signature.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I'll sign my name to that. I'm going to give this to Michael Murray, one of my constituents and a great page here for the last four weeks.

1510

HISTORIC VEHICLES

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of automobile enthusiast constituents of mine. Lennis Trotter, James Cutting and Don Morrison are just a few of them.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the province of Ontario, through Bill 99, enabled owners of historic automobiles to display year of manufacture plates on their vehicles; and

"Whereas John O'Toole, MPP for Durham, has worked hard with others, including MTO staff, to pass legislation allowing the registration of vintage vehicles using year of manufacture licence plates; and

"Whereas owners and restorers of older automobiles have made suggestions for improving regulations governing year of manufacture plates; and

"Whereas these improvements would enable more old auto enthusiasts to display year of manufacture plates and further encourage the collection and restoration of vintage vehicles;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario enact legislation that would make more licence plate numbers available to the public by freeing up the numbers that have been assigned to non-automotive vehicles such as trailers and snowmobiles; and

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario reduce the cost of year of manufacture plates to encourage more owners to make use of these plates and reflect the fact that most historic vehicles are not driven on a regular basis."

On behalf of my constituents, I'm pleased to sign this in support.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present yet another petition from seniors in Stevensville at Black Creek Leisure Homes. Merle Beers, among others, has signed these. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas during the election campaign the Dalton McGuinty Liberals said they would improve the Ontario drug benefit program but now are considering delisting drugs and imposing higher user fees; and

"Whereas the Liberal government has increased costs to seniors by taking away the seniors' property tax rebate and increased the price of hydro;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should keep their campaign promise to improve the Ontario drug benefit program and abandon their plan to delist drugs or increase seniors' drug fees."

I'm in support with my signature.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Again, I have a petition on Simcoe county landfill site 41.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented by Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

Mr Speaker, I'm pleased to sign this and I'm going to give it to Andrew to present to you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WANT OF CONFIDENCE MOTION

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I move that, in the opinion of this House, since the Premier has not adequately handled the conflict-of-interest allegations involving the Minister of Finance and has not followed the ethical standards promised in his throne speech, the government no longer has the confidence of this House.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak to this motion. It's a rare opportunity indeed when we deal with a want of confidence motion in the Ontario Legislature.

I think the circumstances surrounding this particular situation warrant the need for a want of confidence motion. I think the whole issue surrounding the Minister of Finance, Mr Sorbara, in his activities as a director and chair of the audit board of Royal Group Technologies and his subsequent appointment to the McGuinty cabinet and activities subsequent to that, have raised extremely serious issues which have not been, to say the least, adequately addressed by the McGuinty government.

To set the table with respect to what has happened here, the Minister of Finance, Mr Sorbara, prior to his and the Liberals' election to government in October of last year, served as a director of Royal Group Technologies for over 10 years, as I understand it, and for a number of years laterally as the chair of the audit committee. Those are very serious responsibilities in terms of protecting the interests of shareholders in that company.

This is a publicly listed company on the Toronto Stock Exchange. We all know the concerns over the past number of years with respect to publicly traded companies—abuse, misuse of the trust of shareholders—and we're not talking about, for most part, very wealthy investors and speculators. We're talking about the average Joe and Jane Citizen in this province, people who have their future invested in—it might be a retirement fund, a whole range of investment interests that small and medium-sized investors in this province have made in terms of protecting their future. They rely on elected boards of directors to protect their interests, to ensure that their interests are being well looked after, especially when someone is appointed as an audit chair of the board, who has additional responsibilities to oversee the operations of that company and to make every effort to protect the interests of shareholders and ensure that everything is above-board in terms of the operations and decisions being made by the officers of that company.

The question arises that we now are concerned—not just us on this side of the House—but the Ontario Securities Commission and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police are now conducting a criminal investigation, and Revenue Canada is now taking an active role in the investigations underway with respect to Royal Group Technologies' operations and some of the decisions and spending practices of that company. This is now a very serious matter where we have three entities investigating this company. We have the Minister of Finance, who served as a director and audit chair of that company during the time that has come into question with respect to the management of that particular firm.

Our concerns lie around the Minister of Finance's role, of course, but also the fact that he, as Minister of Finance, through his staff, was made aware of the initial decision to conduct an investigation at some point in December of last year. For reasons known best to the minister—and he certainly hasn't confided in us or in the public with respect to his decision, but for reasons that only he can answer to, he opted not to advise the Premier of the province with respect to the fact that these investigations had been initiated sometime in December. He opted for a total of 66 days, over two months, not to apprise his Premier, the leader of his party, the leader of his government, of the fact that a company of which he was a senior director and chair of the audit committee was under investigation by three separate entities, including a criminal investigation by the RCMP. This is totally unheard of and unprecedented in Ontario history.

1520

If you look back at the comments Mr McGuinty, the Premier, made as Leader of the Opposition about the platform of the Liberal party with respect to open government, transparency and ethical standards before the election and the subsequent throne speech—I probably should take a minute to put on the record some of the comments from the throne speech with respect to the ethical standards: “Your new government has made a

commitment to bring an open and honest and transparent approach to government.... It will open up government and its agencies, bring the voices of Ontarians to Queen's Park and make the entire public sector more transparent and responsible....” This doesn't relate just to the Sorbara situation but to a whole range of issues that I'll take a few minutes to get into later.

I was one of the individuals, in response to pressure from the Liberal Party, then in opposition, and the NDP—I was a minister of the Harris government who stepped aside, resigned, when questions were raised about the possibility of a young offender being identified in a throne speech through recognition of the mother, who wanted to express appreciation to the Harris government for establishing a strict-discipline facility in Ontario, which rescued her son from a life of crime. I should point out that that strict-discipline facility, the so-called boot camp, has now been closed by the Liberal government.

The mother wanted to thank our government for saving her son from a life of crime and was identified in the gallery. As a result, the Liberal Party of the day demanded my resignation and said we had committed a crime, that we had breached the Young Offenders Act and I should resign.

A question arose about this. I was not the subject of any investigation, let alone three investigations like Mr Sorbara. I was not the subject of an investigation, but because serious questions of ethical standards were raised, I stepped aside for three months.

I can say a similar situation occurred with my friend from Simcoe, Mr Wilson, when a question arose about one of his staff revealing some public information. Mr Wilson did the right thing. He stepped side until the question was resolved. That's the standard the Harris government set.

Mr McGuinty and his government had all kinds of fine words prior to the election and in the throne speech. But when push comes to shove, when he faced the first real ethical standard of this government, they failed the test miserably, no question about it—perhaps the worst ethical breach in memory.

Interjections.

Mr Runciman: That minister, even though he apparently denied information to his Premier for over two months, is allowed to stay in government. That is unfathomable, and every one of those members across and in the rump over here should be hanging their heads in shame. Not interjecting, not heckling, but hanging their heads in shame. That's the reality, but they don't want to admit it.

They don't want to admit that they're continuing to breach their promises day after day, week after week, month after month—breaking their promises. You wonder why people have no faith in politics or politicians anymore. You are setting the standard. If you want an answer to that question, look in the mirror. Look in the mirror, each and every one of you Liberal members of the Ontario Legislature.

What have they broken so far? At least 20 promises and growing, each and every day. Step aside. Come over and join us. We keep our promises. Join us.

Interjection.

Mr Runciman: Jim Watson, the member in Ottawa, used to be a member of the Progressive Conservative Party. Come back, Jim, come back. Come back where you belong, Jim. Come back. We'll forgive you, Jim. We'll forgive you.

Another issue related to this is the promises, the assurances, that Mr McGuinty and the Liberal Party gave to the people of Ontario during the campaign and again in the throne speech regarding the so-called democratic deficit, where they were going to allow private members of the Legislature—backbenchers of their party and the opposition members, and committee members—to have a real, meaningful role in the business of this place.

I'm very sympathetic to that cause. I was first elected in 1982. I spoke out against the Davis government and the arbitrary decision to purchase a share in an oil company. I suffered the results of that in terms of the government of the day, but I felt good about it and I've felt good about it ever since, that I did what was right. I did what was right and I spoke out about the government of the day.

I've encouraged members opposite. Many of them are new to this place, and it's a very difficult decision to make. I had been in politics for eight or nine years before that. I came to this place with a view that I was not going to be a sheep-like follower, that I was going to stand up for what I believed in, for what my constituents believed in, and not deviate because of pressure from the Premier's office.

Of course, we've seen what's happened here. Many of the new Liberal members have no political experience, and I understand their naïveté with respect to how they respond. We had the representative from Peterborough, Mr Leal, who was the spokesperson at the committee, indicating that he was charged with the responsibility of the government.

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): Leal the seal.

Mr Runciman: Leal the trained seal. That's what we'll call him: Leal the trained seal.

There they were, professing to be speaking on an individual basis, but Mr Leal gave the goods away. He said, "I have been charged with the responsibility to protect Mr Sorbara's tail." That's the reality. He didn't say it quite that way, but that's the reality. He was protecting the Minister of Finance's tail on this situation.

If we look at that, it should be of concern to all of us, not just us on this side but all of you who came here, I think, with the strong belief that you were going to play a meaningful role in the deliberations and decisions.

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): We are.

Mr Runciman: You are not. This was a first real test of all of you with respect to how this matter was dealt with in the general government committee by the Liberal members of that committee, all six of them speaking as one, not because they believed Mr Sorbara did the right

thing, not because this was an ethical standard they supported or believed in. No, they did it because they were told by the whip's office, "This is what the Premier's office wants you to do"—clear and simple, no other answer to it.

You can get up today and try to put a different face on this, but it was so blatant, so clear to anybody participating in the committee or watching it on television or being a general observer of government activities that this was a miserable failure, another very significant breaking of a commitment by Mr McGuinty, which he just threw out the window, rubbed his heel on, and insulted each and every member who ran for his party in the election last year—absolutely insulting. You should all be offended. You shouldn't be standing here defending it.

Don't defend it. You can't defend it. It's in writing. Mr McGuinty stood up here and we heard the Lieutenant Governor read the speech from the throne in which these commitments were made. Get the throne speech out. Re-read it and look at the commitments in terms of integrity, in terms of ethical standards, in terms of enabling backbenchers to play a meaningful role in this place. It was all thrown out the window because of Mr Sorbara and the defence of Premier McGuinty.

Why did he defend a man who refused to tell him for 66 days that he could be the subject of an investigation by three different agencies? Why did he defend him? Why did he direct his backbenchers to defend him? It's a big question.

1530

What's the reality here? Why did this happen? There is no real reason for it other than the fact that the real Premier is sitting in that chair over there. The real Premier, the person really calling the shots in this government, is a man called Greg Sorbara. He's the real Premier.

We know, if we look at the polls before the election, if we look at the polls after the election and if we look at the poll this week with respect to Mr McGuinty, there is very little public support. I know, talking of members of the Liberal Party, that there is not a lot of confidence in their ranks. There wasn't before the election and there isn't now. Their confidence is in Mr Sorbara, and Mr McGuinty knows that. His strings are being pulled. It's shameful.

I've taken up too much time. I know other colleagues wish to speak on this.

After we come in here for a vote at roughly 6 o'clock, I encourage all the Liberal members of the Legislature who believed in the platform they ran on, who believed in integrity in government, who believed in maintaining a high ethical standard, to vote with us. Vote for your platform. Vote with the Conservative Party of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Guelph-Wellington.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member for Guelph-Wellington now has the floor.

Mrs Sandals: I'm pleased to rise today to speak in opposition to the motion of non-confidence. In fact, I'm

surprised that this group has the unmitigated gall to talk about the McGuinty government breaking its promises. These people have the ultimate broken promise. They arrived last year at the Magna plant in a whole lot of media hoopla and unveiled a budget which they told the people of Ontario was a balanced budget. Do you think that promise, their promise to balance the budget, was kept? Absolutely not. What did we find when we got here? We found that they had broken the ultimate promise. No more Tory good management—total mismanagement. They were running a deficit of \$5.6 billion, the ultimate broken promise, and what happened? The people of Ontario lost confidence in the Conservative government. That's why we have a McGuinty government today.

They've had the gall to talk about Bill 8 and complain because we are going to have accountability agreements with hospitals. But what about their record? They brought in supervisors and totally took over three school boards. Most of the public knows about that. It got a lot of publicity. What got less publicity was that the Conservative government took total control away from local boards in seven hospital boards, and they have the gall to say that we have draconian legislation. They're the people with draconian legislation.

You don't have to believe me or the Liberal Party about their record of mismanagement. One of the things I've been doing lately that has been very interesting is sitting on the public accounts committee and looking at what the Provincial Auditor has had to say about the Conservative record of mismanagement.

Look at the justice portfolio, the Attorney General's portfolio. We have the longest backlog in our courts in 10 years. Do you know that over half the people in our provincial jails have never been convicted? They're just waiting for a trial, because the Conservatives let our courts get into such a mess that we have a huge backlog.

It isn't just the backlogs in the courts. The Provincial Auditor talked about the mismanagement of funds for building and renovating courthouses, a record where no tendering took place, and suddenly a contract balloons from \$4 million or \$5 million up to \$40 million or \$50 million with no tendering taking place: total mismanagement.

We look at children's mental health. There are more kids on the waiting list, according to the Provincial Auditor's examination, than getting treatment.

Look at the Family Responsibility Office. Deadbeat parents are \$1.3 billion behind in court-ordered payments to their children. What happens if a parent calls from my neck of the woods outside the GTA to say, "Hey, I didn't get my support payment this month"? Some 90% of the time they get a busy signal. That data is several years old and we asked at public accounts, "Where is the most recent data?" Do you know what the answer was? "The minister told us to stop collecting the data." We don't know how bad the busy signal problem is now. They want to talk to us about our record and mismanagement? They are the people with the broken promises, the

mismanagement and a lack of confidence from the people of Ontario.

What about our platform? They like to talk about our platform and the things we promised as Liberal candidates going door-to-door.

First of all, I want to make it clear that we were crystal clear as we went door-to-door and talked to the people of Ontario that our platform was a platform for our whole mandate, for our entire term of government. Nobody said we were going to keep all our promises in the first month or two; no government could possibly do that. But that doesn't mean that we haven't been very busy. We have been here for less than six months, but let me tell you about some of the things we have done to keep our promises and to bring real, positive change to the people of Ontario.

The Conservative government gave hundreds of millions of dollars to private schools. We promised to stop funding private schools and to divert that money to our public schools, and we have already reinvested \$112 million in the most vulnerable children in our province. Promise kept.

One of reasons that we have this awful \$5.6-billion deficit is that this party kept handing out corporate tax cuts that our budget could not afford. We said we were going to stop that, and we did stop that. Promise kept.

When this Conservative government got funding for child care from the federal government, do you think they spent that money on child care? No way. We said we would change that, and we did change that. The new money that has come from the federal government—\$9.7 million—we have spent on child care. Promise kept.

This government, the Tory government, fired water inspectors. What did we end up with? We ended up with Walkerton. What have we done? We're hiring water inspectors, because we know that the people of Ontario want safe drinking water. Promise kept.

They fired meat inspectors. What have we got? We've got provincial plants where the quality of meat has been brought under question. What have we done? We've hired meat inspectors. Promise kept.

Interjection.

Mrs Sandals: They're just confused.

You know, they didn't raise the minimum wage for eight years. In my riding of Guelph-Wellington there are a tremendous number of people who are working poor. They are working very, very hard, they are working at minimum wage, but these people didn't care about the working poor. Oh, they tell you they care about the working poor. They are really concerned about whether McDonald's and Tim Hortons can keep making profits, but they didn't actually raise the minimum wage, ever. We have already raised the minimum wage. Promise kept.

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They muzzled the children's advocate. They ignored the children's advocate when they talked about the Toronto Youth Assessment Centre. We listened; we closed it. They ignored the children's advocate when they

talked about problems in children's aid societies. We've invested \$64 million in children's aid societies. Believe me, in my community that is truly appreciated. We kept our promise.

I could go on, I'm sure, for hours and hours, talking about the promises we've kept. It is totally frivolous to claim that this government has not kept its promises. We have. We have an amazing record. I'm sure my colleagues will tell you more about our record, but this is a totally frivolous motion. I am not supporting it.

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): I am pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this non-confidence motion debate, which is the first that we've had in this House since the new government took office. It's an opportunity for all the new members of the Legislative Assembly to act like individual members representing their constituents and express their constituents' views with respect to the performance of this government and the confidence that their constituents do not have in this government. So I expect we'll have a large number of members here at the appropriate time later today to vote in favour of non-confidence; to vote in favour of the motion.

There are good reasons to support non-confidence in this government, including, of course: promises made, promises broken; the integrity deficit that this government has created; and the reality of fiscal irresponsibility that we're seeing with this government.

If I may talk for a few moments about the promises: There are many promises that have been broken. The basic problem is this: When someone seeks to become government or a party seeks to become government, and Mr McGuinty, who seeks to become Premier, decides that his route to power should be to promise to be all things to all people and make in excess of 231 promises, then, regrettably, we end up in a situation where of course those promises cannot be kept. No one can be all things to all people, and that's what the Liberal Party tried to do during the last election campaign.

The most important pledge is the pledge that relates to spending and taxing. The two, as you know, are inextricably linked. In order to support massive spending, a spending spree that this government has embarked on, something in the neighbourhood of \$2.4 billion to \$2.6 billion so far in less than six months—there was another \$500 million today, so we're in the range now of something like \$3 billion of spending in less than six months, in addition to all the other spending, of course, that's part of the operation of government. If they keep this pace up, they'll be at \$6 billion or more in new spending in the first fiscal year of their government, which would be rivalled only, I believe, by the Bob Rae government back in the early 1990s.

The most important promise was the promise with respect to taxes and not raising taxes. Mr McGuinty signed the taxpayer protection promise. Here it is. He signed it. He made a big deal about it, actually, during the course of the election campaign. Mr McGuinty wanted everybody to know that, "I, Dalton McGuinty,

leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, promise, if my party is elected as the next government, that I will: not raise taxes or implement any new taxes without the explicit consent of Ontario voters...." One would think, given that that pledge has been broken, re-broken and broken again, that all members of this House would support this motion of non-confidence in the government of today.

The promise also included not running deficits, and was signed by Mr McGuinty, who is now the Premier. We'll see, of course, in a few weeks. No doubt we'll have confirmation then that that promise, that fundamental promise to the people and voters of the province of Ontario, is broken as well, because it'll be difficult to see how this government could balance any budget if they're going to spend an extra \$3 billion in six months in Ontario.

They are hiding information. The government, we know, asked the public service to cost their promises, and we know that a report was prepared for the government, and we know that the government refuses to produce it. So the people of Ontario are asked to sit in the dark with respect to the costs of these promises. This is the open, accountable, responsible government that was promised by these Liberal members who are sitting opposite here today. How they could have confidence in this government, the government having broken those fundamental pledges to the province of Ontario, is unimaginable.

Now, this promise by Mr McGuinty not to raise taxes or implement any new taxes applied, as you can see, to all taxes. But now they are starting to weasel on this. Now we have a press conference today with Mr Sorbara, the Minister of Finance. He was asked by the reporter for the Toronto Star, Mr Benzie, "No, but you said you are not going to raise income taxes. You've said that categorically. The Premier said the same thing." Mr Sorbara replied, "It comes from the campaign. We said during the campaign we're not going to raise personal income taxes and we are going to be true to our word on that."

"True to our word" on what? Whose word? Who is the Premier? If the Premier is Mr McGuinty, we know what the promise is: "If my party is elected, I will not raise taxes or implement any new taxes." That's what one Premier says. Then we have the putative Premier, Mr Sorbara, the Minister of Finance, who now modifies that to say, "I'll be true to my word"—and his word is about personal—"not going to raise personal income taxes." Well, personal income taxes are important. They are a large part of the budget of the province of Ontario. They are about \$18 billion. But the revenues are about \$70 billion, so there is all kinds of tax room there.

I say to the people of Ontario, get ready, because there are huge increases coming against you by this government—this government, this leader; this Minister of Finance, this putative Premier; this nominal Premier, Mr McGuinty, who promised that they would not raise your taxes, and now they are going to raise all kinds of taxes against you.

So that's the promise issue. I hear it in Whitby, I hear it in Ajax, I hear it around the province of Ontario: how truly disappointed people are. How it encourages cynicism, as my colleague from Leeds-Grenville said. How it discourages young people when they look at people in public life and say, "Is this what it means? Is this what it means, that a man who wants to be Premier of Ontario will go out and make 231 promises; promises that he knew when he made them he could not keep?" Look what that does to our young people, and look at the example, the negative example, that is for our young people in the province.

Broken promises; promises made, promises broken, fundamental commitments to the people of Ontario about not raising taxes and about balancing budgets and not running deficits that are being broken by Mr McGuinty, supported, I hope not, by his members here today. I hope they will support this motion of non-confidence when they reflect on their responsibilities as elected members of this Legislature.

There is another reason, a good reason, to support this motion, and that's the integrity issue. This is a big issue across the province of Ontario; it is across our country. When you look at a former Minister of Finance in Ottawa who says that he was unaware of a \$250-million program, \$100 million or so of which went missing; when we have a former Prime Minister of the country who stands up publicly and says, "Well, so what if someone stole a few million dollars?" The goal was worth it because it was national unity, in the view of former Prime Minister Chrétien. So what if someone stole a few million dollars? Well, say that to the person who is going to the Tim Hortons after the budget and has to pay tax for the first time, retail sales tax, 8%, on soup and a sandwich or on a muffin or whatever at Tim Hortons. Say that to them, that it is only a few millions that were stolen.

1550

These are integrity issues, just as it's an integrity issue when the Minister of Finance serves on the board of directors for 10 years or so of a publicly traded company, a company that went public, called Royal Group Technologies, serves as chair of the audit department, becomes the Minister of Finance, and then we learn subsequently and he learns subsequently that the Ontario Securities Commission is investigating a five-year period, during most of which he served on the board, and during a good part of which he served as the chair of the audit committee.

I am familiar with the duties of the Minister of Finance, having had the honour to serve as Minister of Finance for a time in Ontario. I am familiar with the dealings that the Minister of Finance necessarily has with the chair and the Ontario Securities Commission. I am familiar with the importance of market credibility, of there being absolute confidence in the regulators and in the Minister of Finance as the minister responsible for the Toronto Stock Exchange and the Ontario Securities Commission.

This is an investigation of this company not only by the Ontario Securities Commission but by the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency and also, then, by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Companies do not act in a vacuum. Companies cannot act except through agents. The agents that they use are the board of directors. One of the most important functions of the board is to make sure that full disclosure is made to shareholders. The investigation relates to something like \$32 million over the course of five years being exchanged between a casino resort in an island in the Caribbean and Ontario.

Interjection: St Kitts.

Mr Flaherty: St Kitts. This is a concern, that the Minister of Finance of Ontario is preparing a budget now and it may be that later on he is one of the persons cited in one way or another in one or more of the investigations. That's the problem. If we had a high standard being maintained by the Premier of Ontario and by this government, in which we do not have confidence, then it would be clear that the minister should have stepped down until the investigations were complete. Indeed, that was the practice of our government and was followed by Minister Runciman, as he then was, and Minister Wilson, as he then was, both of whom were exonerated and returned to cabinet.

So we have this standard now. We have seen it in Ottawa in the evidence before the House of Commons committee by former Minister Gagliano and former Minister Dingwall. Here is the Liberal standard of ministerial responsibility: "We are not responsible for what goes on in our ministries." Not only are they not responsible, but they don't know, they say, what goes on in their ministries. Well, they take the salary, they take the limousines, they take the Bombardier jets that they buy with taxpayers' money, they take their expense accounts. But they are not responsible for what goes on in their ministries. Worse, they don't know what goes on in their ministries. So what are they being paid for by the people of Canada?

Similarly, in Ontario we need to move to that parliamentary standard that was maintained by the government of Ontario before this government, which is that a minister steps down when a minister is under investigation over a significant matter. That's the standard that we have followed in this country until now with respect to ministerial responsibility. That kind of accountability is essential.

I can tell you once again that in Whitby and in talking to people around the province, they don't get the failure of the Premier to call upon a minister to step aside until he's cleared. He may be cleared; he may be exonerated. If he is exonerated, fine; then he comes back into cabinet. But if he is not, then no harm has been done to the credibility of government, the image of government, with the people of Ontario during that period of time.

I want to talk a bit about fiscal responsibility, because that is the third reason why this government should be held in non-confidence: spending more than \$3 billion of new money, a spending spree that is—

Interjections.

Mr Flaherty: Oh, I know they are going to say, "The government left us a deficit." Then they are going to say, "Oh, the deficit is more than we said it was because we just went and spent another \$3 billion."

It's difficult to be government. At some point you folks over there are going to say, "My goodness, we are the government." It's difficult to be government. At some point you have to start making decisions. Some of the fundamental decisions deal with revenue and expenses, taxing and spending, and bringing those two into line.

There is a fundamental change in Ontario as a result of the Harris government, and that was, we moved from non-expectation of balanced budgets to a time when the people of Ontario came to expect and demand balanced budgets in this province. That was a cultural change politically. It has affected the government in Ottawa as well. This is good news, that government should live within its means. People believe government should live within its means.

People also believe that when promises are made, they should be kept. When I look at the revenue of the province, you see substantial revenue growth. These are the estimates that came from the government itself, from the Ministry of Finance, just a few months ago. It's helpful to look at these. I welcome people to look at them online at the Ontario government Web site, to look at the kind of revenues the province of Ontario is anticipating: very substantial revenues over the course of the next several years.

"On the basis of private sector consensus economic projections, Ontario can anticipate average revenue growth of about \$4.1 billion annually." Going forward, more than \$4 billion annually. You would think that would be enough for a government to live within its means as we go forward, but no, they've already spent something like \$3 billion in less than six months. How are you ever going to balance a budget? More than that, how are you ever going to have confidence from the people of Ontario when you can't live within \$4-billion increases—staggering amounts of money.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: A little order, please. I can't hear the member on the floor.

Mr Flaherty: Spending: Now we have a problem, big spending being planned. Total expenses for the current fiscal year, something in the neighbourhood of \$75 billion. You would think you would be able to run a government in Ontario with \$75 billion—staggering amounts of money. Personal income tax, more than \$18 billion; retail sales tax, more than \$14 billion; corporations tax, more than \$7 billion; all other taxes, almost \$10 billion—substantial revenue. As we go forward, we see that the revenues will grow—these are the government's own estimates—in three years, to 2006-07, to \$81.7 billion.

If there is any prudence exercised at all by this government going forward, it will be easy to balance the budget, not only this year but next year and the year after that, with \$4 billion extra each year rolling in.

Then you look at the taxes. Now they're planning to tax meals under \$4 in Ontario. This is a tax on students, on seniors. It's a mean-spirited tax. It's a tax, I can tell you, that is brought up by the folks who are responsible for revenue in Ontario, year after year. It was brought up with me when I was Minister of Finance. I said no.

Mr Runciman: Just say no.

Mr Flaherty: Just say no. The reason you say no is that that tax is on students, seniors and low-income earners in Ontario. It's a regressive tax. Why on earth would you impose that tax on those least able to pay in Ontario?

For these reasons, then, for the promises made, promises broken, for the lack of integrity, for the Gagliano-Dingwall standard of ministerial non-responsibility being applied by the Liberals in this House and their fiscal irresponsibility, this tax-and-spend, which we warned the people of Ontario about and which we now see happening, for all of these reasons, I urge all members to vote in support of our motion for non-confidence this afternoon.

1600

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): I was struck a number of times by the remarks of the MPP from Whitby-Ajax, the honourable Mr Jim Flaherty. He seemed to ask repeatedly, "Who is the Premier?" "Who is the Premier?" It struck me that the main reason he was asking that question was that he himself is not as yet the Premier. I would like to commit to Mr Flaherty that, for my part, our government will be most honoured to support you in your leadership bid of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, and would consider it a great honour, and perhaps even a great sport, to see you in the next provincial election—or federal, as the case may be.

I'd also like to speak for a moment about the MPP for Leeds-Grenville, the at times honourable Mr Bob Runciman. I'd like to note for a moment that the level of frothing, spouting and gesticulating makes it clear to us on the government side, and I think to the people of Ontario, that the honourable Bob Runciman is the type of individual who believes firmly that the louder it is, somehow it acquires the veil of credibility. Clearly, the MPP for Leeds-Grenville, the honourable Bob Runciman, not to be outdone by Mr Garfield Dunlop, is the type of individual who believes in making a scene and not making a difference.

The Deputy Speaker: I want to take a minute to remind the member that you should, at every attempt you can, use the member's riding name rather than personal names. Thank you.

Mr Qaadri: Absolutely. The MPP for Simcoe North.

I have to speak against this motion of non-confidence for many reasons, as a member of provincial parliament, as a representative of the great riding of Etobicoke North, as well as of the McGuinty government and the McGuinty vision.

From the throne speech made some months ago, we on the government side have brought forth a number of

initiatives to bring real, positive change to Ontario: our initiative to build a stronger health care system, to be comprehensive, universal, publicly funded and add other quality of accountability; restoring an air of fiscal responsibility and deep respect for the monies that are handed over to the government of Ontario by taxpaying Ontarians; our emphasis on quality education and, I may add, a new respect for the educational communities who, on a daily basis, are engaging in a partnership with the eventual benefactors; that is, of course, the children of Ontario.

As well, there is our mandate to build stronger communities; also highlighting, in particular, our respect for the environment, an entire file, an entire portfolio, an entire mandate that was absolutely abrogated, left in the dust and dismantled by the previous regime; our initiatives in fostering greenbelt protection and smart growth and curbing urban sprawl; laying the foundations for the prosperity of tomorrow, including an intelligent energy policy that will bring forth new supply and conservation and an intelligent pricing mandate.

As well, something that I can speak to very directly, something that was very much missing from the previous regime, is respect and, I would say, further, a celebration of multicultural Canadians, new and newer Canadians, naturalized Canadians, naturalized Ontarians, something that was very sorely missing from the previous regime; and something that perhaps has not really taken place in these august chambers at Queens Park and within the public service is actually engaging Ontarians and the public service directly in an unprecedented consultation and fostering of ideas and of commitment to the bettering of Ontarians and Ontario, our legal structures and our infrastructure of government, as well as the broader public mandate.

In summary, we on the government side are taking responsibility for offering quality public services. We on the government side feel that all these initiatives—whether it's our highways, our energy sector, our health care system or our educational sector, we view these as a sacred trust, as a moral enterprise. Unlike the previous Tory-led government under then-Premiers Eves and Harris, we do not view these areas, these sectors, our sacred trust, as centres for profit to be privatized, to be securitized, to be sold off to the highest bidder and, for example, like the successor corporations Hydro One, Ontario Power Generation and so on, to be used as private fiefdoms, as reward centres in the untendered, secret contracts that seemed to be rife and offered willy-nilly by the previous regime. In sum—I speak with great confidence about this government—we are delivering real, positive change to make good on all our various commitments, whether it's regarding health care, education, building a stronger community or laying the foundation for the prosperity of tomorrow.

Mr John Yakubuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): It is my honour and pleasure to speak in support of this motion. The reason we're here is to talk about why we believe this motion is warranted, based on the conduct of

this government, this Premier and of course the finance minister. We've got so many unanswered questions here. On December 22 they became aware that there was an investigation of Royal Group Technologies.. He kept this secret for 66 days, kept it secret from his own Premier, which of course begs the question, who is the real Premier? But that's another story. This went on for 66 days, when there was no disclosure to the Premier that the minister was aware of this. An order in council on February 26 indicated that the finance minister lost his powers and duties with regard to the Securities Act. This investigation was threefold: the Ontario Securities Commission, the RCMP and the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency. It was a huge investigation of Royal Group Technologies that this minister chose to pretend didn't exist or to simply hide from his Premier.

On March 4, he also lost his powers and duties under the Commodity Futures Act and the Toronto Stock Exchange Act. Yet this minister participated in the discussions which led to the appointment of a very competent and worthwhile appointee, Susan Wolburgh Jenah, as vice-chair of the OSC, a body which could ultimately act as his judge and jury, depending upon where this investigation takes them and what turns up down the road. That's just a little bit of chronology.

Then the minister stated to the media on February 26, "When I put my interests in trust, I had no shares in Royal Group," when in fact it was a false statement. He had jointly held at that time 1,000 shares with his wife. Then there's the issue of the questionable involvement with regard to a casino in St Kitts. All these kinds of surrounding questions remained unanswered before the House came back into session and unanswered while we were in session. I want to read from a piece Michael Bryant wrote in the Toronto Star on January 25, 2001:

"The principle of individual ministerial responsibility ensures public accountability of the government....

"More importantly, the minister is accountable to the Legislature, which is, in turn, accountable to the electorate. This is the crux of our system of responsible government....

"But ministers are answerable to Parliament, always. When something goes wrong, they must explain what happened and why, and they must take remedial action to fix it. Sometimes they must resign; always they must answer to the people."

1610

Since this House reconvened on March 22, there have been over 100 questions asked to the Premier on the finance minister, and to the finance minister himself about his conduct with regard to the scandal. Not one question has been answered. They've dodged, they've ducked, they've played rope-a-dope, but they haven't answered a single question. So this is the kind of standard we can expect now from this government, because they've set the bar on the very first test. They've been given their first test and they have failed it, and failed it miserably.

The member from Etobicoke North talked about examples that we set for children. This is quite an example. We are telling children: "Do you know how you get ahead in life? You tell people whatever you think they want to hear. You bring out an election platform that is full of bunk, and then you do whatever you want when you get elected because it doesn't matter." Well, that's quite an example to the children of this province.

I want to read a little bit, quoting the Premier at the swearing-in ceremony on October 23: "A poet once described hope as 'that everlasting duty that heaven lays for its own sake on mankind's heart.' We embrace this notion of hope being our duty, our obligation, our shared responsibility. Our mission is to build a government that inspires hope in all Ontarians."

Applause.

Mr Yakabuski: And it got applause then. But those same Ontarians gave this Premier a 75% disapproval rating just this week. I wonder where their hope quotient sits at this time with this government. Where's their hope with this government? This is the first mess they've been faced with and this is how they've handled it.

"I want you to know that yours is an idealistic government," quoting the Premier again. Some ideals. When you're caught, deny, run and hide, avoid responsibility, don't own up to anything and hope that it will go away. Those are quite the ideals to live by.

Here's another one: "My friends, let our new government govern with a full heart. Let it provide honest service. And let it show as much love, sacrifice and courage as the people we have the privilege of serving."

Wonderful, platitudinous words and phrases, written by someone else, no doubt, but spoken by the Premier at his swearing-in ceremony on October 23.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): That was a great day.

Mr Yakabuski: That was a wonderful day for the Liberal Party; no doubt about that.

Throughout all of this, there was a motion put forward by the honourable member from Toronto-Danforth to take this issue back to the committee on general government. The finance minister indicated that he would gladly go and sit before that committee for their questions. What happened? I don't hold it against the honourable member from Peterborough, who spoke opposing the motion on that dark day in March. I don't hold it against him personally, because I do believe he is a fine gentleman. But make no mistake about it, he received his marching orders in spades: "This is what you will do and this is how you're going to do it." The five other Liberal members of that committee dutifully did their job, as they were told, and defeated that motion, thereby again subverting true democracy and giving the people a chance to see and hear what really happened.

I want to look at the speech from the throne, which again was to reflect the plans of this government for the next several years in Ontario. They talked about a new standard of integrity, a new standard of ethics. Again, the first challenge, the first opportunity to live up to those

standards has proven to be a dismal failure for this government. I quote the Premier: "Your new government understands it can only hold others to a higher standard if it subjects itself to the same standard." Those are tremendous words. It's a shame he's not going to live up to them.

It seems that Minister Sorbara is immune to those standards. Let me tell you this: I am absolutely certain of one thing, that I won't be judged necessarily on the standards someone else sets for me, but I will be, and should be, judged on the standards I set for myself. This government is no exception.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity today to reaffirm the confidence I have in the Premier and in our government. Let me begin by addressing the concerns raised by the honourable member from Leeds-Grenville.

I have had an opportunity to speak about the conflict of interest allegations regarding the Minister of Finance before in this House. At that time, I stated that I wanted to make my points as simply as possible for the members opposite. Apparently, I did not make them simple enough, so allow me to try again.

On March 8, the Honourable Coulter Osborne reached a conclusion, and in his report the Integrity Commissioner clearly stated that Minister Sorbara took sufficient steps to ensure he was not in a conflict of interest, that Minister Sorbara acted with integrity and was never in a conflict of interest.

To adequately handle these allegations is to abide by the ruling and opinions of the Integrity Commissioner. "Adequately handling" these allegations is just what the Premier has done. In fact, the Premier has gone above and beyond adequately handling these allegations. The Premier has acted with integrity, with honesty and with full confidence of the ruling of the ethics commissioner. This government is not satisfied with "adequate;" this government holds a higher ethical standard than the last. The Premier made the right decision to stand behind the Minister of Finance, a minister of this government, who was at no time in a conflict of interest.

In case some of the members opposite missed what the Integrity Commissioner did rule on and still have questions, allow me to clarify once again in the simplest terms: Was the Minister of Finance in a conflict of interest? No. Did Minister Sorbara attempt to use any information to his personal advantage? No. Did the Integrity Commissioner rely on Minister Sorbara's version of the events? No. Was the Minister of Finance ever personally under investigation? No. Did the minister violate the Members' Integrity Act? No.

Now for the yeses. Has the Minister of Finance acted with the utmost integrity on this matter? Yes. Has the Premier acted adequately, as well as with the utmost integrity, on this matter? Yes. Did the Premier make it very clear, and did Minister Sorbara agree, that should he become the subject of an investigation, he would step aside from his ministerial responsibilities? Yes. And in so doing, in all of his actions, has the Premier followed the ethical standards outlined in his throne speech? Yes.

1620

Allow me to elaborate. The throne speech told Ontarians that our government has the integrity to tell Ontarians the truth about the challenges we face as a province, and we have done that. We have given the people the straight goods on the deficit. We have launched a public inquiry into Ipperwash.

The throne speech told Ontarians that their voices would be brought to Queen's Park. We have conducted extensive consultations on the budget. We have listened to the people of Ontario, and we are bringing their voices to Queen's Park each and every day. Not only are we bringing them to Queen's Park, but the Minister of Finance will be articulating them from Queen's Park, not a Magna auto plant.

The throne speech told Ontarians that the government would open up its agencies, making the public sector more transparent, more responsible. To the chagrin of the former government, we have done just that. We have made employees of Hydro One and OPG and their subsidiaries subject to the same salary disclosure rules as public servants. We have set up a health council that independently reports on the state of health care, and we have kept the inspection of our nuclear plants in public hands.

The throne speech told Ontarians that there would be a genuine commitment to bringing open, honest and transparent approaches to government. Not only have we done this, but our government has approached each issue with this understanding. We are raising the standards of ethics in this government, and the Premier is leading the way.

The delivery of real and meaningful changes to the people of Ontario under the ethical and honest leadership of the Premier has not only made Ontario better, but is making Ontario more confident in itself. Each and every day, this government continues to focus on what really matters to my constituents in Etobicoke-Lakeshore and to the people of this province. We're focusing on health care. We're focusing on improving education, on protecting our environment, on cleaning our air and protecting our water.

In my own community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, one that languished under the former government, the people are more confident. My constituents have had their voices heard in pre-budget consultations. They have the knowledge that their air will be cleaner with the closure of the Lakeview generating station. They have access to better, more accountable health care, knowing that their family members at the Etobicoke Trillium Health Centre are safe and secure. They have lower auto insurance rates. And the list goes on and on.

The reason for this optimism, the reason for these changes, has been the stalwart leadership of Premier McGuinty. As I conclude my speaking time on this want of confidence motion, I want to be sure that I am very clear: Confidence in the Premier and our government is not only found within this House but, as a result of choosing change and choosing the ethical, honest and

hard-working leadership of the Premier, many houses across our great province are more confident today because they know that this government is the right government to repair the damage left behind after eight long years—eight long, dark years—and bring Ontario back so that it will once again be the best place in which to live, work, learn and raise a family, a province which all Ontarians will be proud to leave to future generations.

That is why I am confident in this government, and I know I can say clearly that my own community, that of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, is confident in this government and confident in the Premier.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I'm pleased to join in debate this afternoon on the motion of non-confidence that's been put forward. To refresh the memory of those here, I'll read that motion. It says, "That, in the opinion of this House, since the Premier has not adequately handled the conflict of interest allegations involving the Minister of Finance, and has not followed the ethical standards promised in his throne speech, the government no longer has the confidence of this House." We'll be voting on that at 5:50 this afternoon, and I will be voting in support of that motion.

I'd like to refer to the throne speech, because that is what is referred to in this motion. This was the throne speech delivered just a short time ago:

"Your new government has made a commitment to bring an open, honest and transparent approach to government.... It will open up government and its agencies, bring the voices of Ontarians to Queen's Park, and make the entire public sector more transparent and responsible to Ontarians, because transparency and accountability are the best safeguards of public services.... It has given every government MPP a role on the powerful cabinet committees that help guide government policy. In the months ahead, this new government will give all members an opportunity to do more on behalf of their constituents."

That's what the government said in the throne speech, and those are pretty lofty goals. How has it played out in reality? I think the situation that the Minister of Finance finds himself in is a good case study, and the result should be a matter of serious concern.

The government has been given an opportunity to prove just how serious they are about open, honest and transparent government. I'll just briefly go through some of the details of that situation.

It was revealed recently that the Ontario Securities Commission, Revenue Canada and the RCMP are investigating the dealings of the Royal Group Technologies Ltd group of companies, of which Mr Sorbara was a director for 10 years and in fact was the chair of the audit committee.

It was also revealed that Mr Sorbara knew about this investigation back in December, when he was the Minister of Finance in charge of the OSC, and yet, for two months, didn't even tell the Premier, kept this to himself. When the Premier in fact learned about this, I think the prudent thing would have been to ask him to

step aside, at least while this is being investigated. It may prove that he has done nothing wrong, but it may not. So I think the prudent thing to do is to ask him to step aside. That is certainly what the media has been saying and—

Mr Wilson: Public opinion.

Mr Miller:—that is certainly the public opinion.

The member sitting beside me, when he was in cabinet, had a situation where one of his staff members did something that required him to step aside. He did the honourable thing, stepped aside, and when it proved to be of no consequence, he was back in cabinet. That's what should be happening now. That's a standard that was set back in our government. The standard is currently being lowered.

But what does the media say about this situation? Well, in the *Toronto Sun*: "Sorbara Must Step Down." In the *Toronto Star*: "Sorbara Must Quit Until Probe Over." In the *North Bay Nugget*: "Sorbara Should Step Down." In the *Kingston Whig-Standard*: "Sorbara Should Step Aside." In the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*: "Sorbara should step aside as finance minister, at least until the investigation is complete." That was the common practice back in our government. In the *Windsor Star*: "Sorbara should immediately resign from cabinet based on the clear conflict of interest that is posed by investigations and his responsibilities as finance minister," and I think—

Mr Wilson: That's a Liberal paper, too.

Mr Miller: That's a paper that tends to have Liberal leanings.

In the two-month period when he knew he was being investigated—he was in charge of the OSC—he appointed a new vice-chair of the OSC in that time period. That vice-chair could in fact be his judge and jury if something comes up. If that's not a conflict or a perceived conflict, I don't know what is.

In the *St Catharines Standard*: "Sorbara Should Step Aside Until Investigation is Over." In the *Hamilton Spectator*: "McGuinty must insist that Sorbara leave cabinet until the investigation is completed."

How have they responded to this? They've lowered the ethical standard by stonewalling. After repeated questions in question period almost every day, they basically go to the Integrity Commissioner's letter and keep reading and rereading it. He has refused to answer any basic questions about this. He has refused to ask the minister to step aside. This is in marked contrast to the standard which Mr McGuinty, the Premier, used when he was in opposition.

I quote from just a short time ago, when he was questioning then-Premier Ernie Eves on a question of ethics. Premier McGuinty said, "You cannot fob this matter over to the Integrity Commissioner. It's about you, your judgment and your standards. At what point in time are you, as Premier, going to exercise some leadership, at least some modicum of leadership, and tell your caucus and cabinet ministers that in your government, there are some things that are right and there are some things that are wrong ... ?" That was Premier

McGuinty when he was in opposition. What happened to that standard?

1630

What about the way the government is controlling MPPs and their ability to look into this matter? There was a motion that was put forward at the general government committee by Ms Churley of the NDP. I'll read that motion. It said the notice of motion to the general government committee is "that the standing committee on general government convene to examine the propriety of actions taken, or not taken, by Finance Minister Greg Sorbara, political staff in Mr Sorbara's office, senior ministry staff and various officials at the Ontario Securities Commission on matters related to the OSC investigation of Royal Group Technologies."

What happened when this motion came to the committee? The government used its majority on the committee and more or less lined up all the government members and defeated this opportunity to look into the situation. So this is certainly a different standard than is being applied now.

I think what the government is doing and what it has done in the past election—they said one thing to get elected, and now that they're in government they're doing something very different. One of the things that concerns me most is the Premier's pledge to not increase taxes. He signed the taxpayers' protection promise to great fanfare. It was read out earlier this afternoon. I remember commercials that said, "I won't increase your taxes but I won't lower them either," lots of those commercials.

I'm looking at today's *Toronto Sun* talking about the proposed change in the tax structure for meals under \$4, so that meals under \$4 would now be taxed the 8% provincial sales tax. Is that not a tax increase? I would say that yes, it is a tax increase. That might be why the Premier is seeing some pretty poor ratings in the polls. In this article, and I'm quoting from Christina Blizzard in today's *Toronto Sun*, it says, "Big Brother Knows Best."

"In a Sun-Leger poll reported yesterday, McGuinty scored a pathetic 25% approval rating, compared to Fantino's whopping 65%. In fact, only 2% think McGuinty is doing an excellent job." I guess that's what happens when you say one thing to get elected and then do something very different after getting elected.

This tax they're talking about on meals under \$4: Did you realize—from this article again—that "95% of meals served in hospital cafeterias cost less than \$4; and 86% of meals in schools, colleges and universities are under \$4. The cost to restaurants is expected to be \$200 million in an industry where walk-in business was down 9% last year, due to SARS"? So this is a tax on university students. It's a tax on high school students. It's a tax on those who can least afford it. It's a new tax, when the government clearly ran in the election saying they weren't going to increase taxes. So that is one very significant broken promise.

What about the promise to balance the budget? We will find out in the next month whether they're planning

on balancing this year's budget. I would be very surprised, based on what they've been talking about, if they're going to balance the budget.

Spending has increased 9.7% in the last year. The spending for this past year was \$75.6 billion. Really, what this government has to deal with is its spending problem. It has great revenues and has forecast great revenues, I think, of \$81 billion next year. So it's going to have record revenue, but what it needs to do is control its spending. If it doesn't, if its solution to not having the willpower to say no and rein in its spending is to just keep increasing taxes, like they've increased corporate taxes, like they're looking at taking \$200 million from those who can least afford it, what is going to result from that is lost jobs, for one thing. We're seeing that already in the month of March, where we saw 25,000 jobs lost in the province of Ontario.

Mr Wilson: Biggest loss in eight years.

Mr Miller: I would like to point out that our record over the last eight years was a million new jobs created. This is the sort of thing that starts to happen as you start to tax small business, the engine of economic activity, the creator of the jobs in this province. That's the sort of thing that we're going to see start to happen.

So we've seen, clearly, many broken promises, I believe 19 at this point. And given the way they've handled the whole affair with the Minister of Finance it's very clear that I will be supporting this non-confidence motion, based on the fact that they haven't kept their promises and that they haven't handled this affair properly.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I see I have 23 minutes. I wondered how long I would have.

The Deputy Speaker: It's that seat change that's getting me.

Mr Prue: I have not moved myself.

This is a motion that I must confess I struggled with a little in determining what to say, how to say it and what position to take. This is a non-confidence motion, the first that has been brought forward on this new government. It is a non-confidence motion that has been brought forward before the first budget has been made. I am a politician, a Canadian and an Ontarian who believes that you have to let any new government have an opportunity to see—

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): A honeymoon.

Mr Prue: A honeymoon period, to see exactly what they are going to do and to determine whether or not they are living up to the promises they have made, whether they're acting in a way that is becoming of that particular government and the expectations they brought to the people at the time of the election.

So I have a great deal of difficulty standing here on what may be an appropriate motion—I would suggest probably is an appropriate motion—because I think it's about a month early. I would have much preferred to have stood here about a month from now, after the budget was delivered, so that we could know, and would know appropriately, whether this government was living

up to the commitments and the expectations of the people who had elected them.

However, I am struggling because the issue is before me today. I am struggling because the motion was made and because we are going to vote on it, at 10 minutes to 6. I have looked very carefully at what is being proposed. In a nutshell, the member has put forward that the Premier does not have the confidence of this House because he did not handle the conflict with the Minister of Finance in an appropriate manner and has not followed ethical standards.

We have all watched for the last couple of months as this saga has unfolded. We have watched when the press first brought to light the story of Royal Group. We have watched the machinations, we have watched what the Minister of Finance had to say on the first day, the second day, the third day, as this story unfolded. I have to tell you that this is both a serious and a complex affair. It is serious because the past actions of the minister with the corporation known as Royal Group have been murky. They have been difficult to understand for the average layperson, but we do know several things.

Number one, throughout much of the period, he was on the board of governors of Royal Group. Because he was on the board, he was in effect the management of that company. The board of directors can be nothing else other than the management of the company. He had a two-fold responsibility inasmuch as he was also the chair of the audit committee. That company had many branches. It was a parent group of many branches.

I have to tell the members present that although I did not see it on its original run, I had an opportunity to view recently a television program on TVOntario where they delved into one of the smaller companies that come under Royal.

Mr O'Toole: Union-busting.

Mr Prue: Yes. It was very serious and to me disheartening that Royal Group was involved in union busting, in threatening the death of members, of doing a great many things. When the union almost succeeded in establishing itself, Royal Group was able to yank the company away. All the people who were attempting to build better lives for themselves and their families through a union movement, their jobs were gone. So I have some very real difficulties knowing that the finance minister was in some way peripherally involved, as the parent company of this group, with a company that would hire goons and threaten death.

I also have some difficulty that the owner and principal of this company paid himself some \$6 million as a bonus. In fact, that is why this company is being investigated. It is being investigated by the Ontario Securities Commission, which is close to home for all of us, but also by two federal agencies, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Customs.

1640

It is a complex matter, as well as being a serious one, because people have a difficult time fathoming how the minister was involved and whether or not he stood to

personally gain. I'm going to come to the Integrity Commissioner later. It is a complex matter inasmuch as the actions all appear to have taken place prior to Mr Sorbara's becoming the Minister of Finance of Ontario. They are past actions over which he no longer has or should have direct control. They are complex because there have been changes to the reporting conditions brought about by the Premier to change the responsibilities for the Ontario Securities Commissioner from the Minister of Finance, where they have traditionally been for the last—I don't know how many years—probably 20 or 30 years, to the management of the treasury board. There are questions that need to be asked by all of us as to why this circumstance took place. I heard what the Premier had to say, that he's exercising caution, but I have to question whether they needed to take place if the Premier has that much confidence in the Minister of Finance and, in fact, taken in light of what the Integrity Commissioner had to say.

I also have to question the changes that have taken place in taking the Toronto Stock Exchange under the umbrella of the manager of treasury board. That, too, has been an untoward change that has never before, to the best of my knowledge, taken place to that particular minister by the province of Ontario under any of the machinations, under any of the governments that have been in power during this century.

We have some real difficulties, too, because of what the security rules had to say. The Minister of Finance's interpretations of the security rules are very much at odds with what other security practitioners, lawyers, people who are in the field, think they say. The Minister of Finance believes that he could not have told the Premier or anyone else of knowledge that he had around the investigation. Other securities experts beg to differ. A question needs to be asked—and I'm not sure that this forum is the appropriate one; perhaps a court of law is—as to how that law should be interpreted. Be that as it may, it's not very clear.

Into all this we have the weighing in of the Integrity Commissioner. I have watched with some dismay over the last number of weeks where the repeated questions of the official opposition to the Premier, to the Finance minister, to the manager of the treasury board and to others in the cabinet have all been met with the same response, which is, "The Integrity Commissioner says," and then a quotation is taken from that. With the greatest of respect to the Integrity Commissioner, and I have the highest respect for his abilities, his staff, his own personal integrity, and for everything that that office holds, my reading of what he had to say is that it followed a very, very narrow perspective. The narrowness of the perspective was that which was related to the Members' Integrity Act. And what is the issue before this Legislature, or what ought to be before this Legislature, is infinitely larger than the Members' Integrity Act. It involves parliamentary privilege. It involves history of this institution going back hundreds and hundreds of years, not only in this country but in Great Britain before it, and

throughout the Commonwealth, where the integrity of the House, the Legislature, and the responsibility of the executive branch must be of the highest standard, a standard which I would suggest transcends even the Members' Integrity Act.

We have the whole issue that we followed in the press. As has been alluded to by previous speakers, many of the newspapers in Ontario have called for the Minister of Finance to step aside for the purpose of the investigation and, I would suggest, for the purpose of allowing this government to get on with its business. Because as was said—and it was said by me, and I will admit to that—when this whole affair broke, the issue today is not so much what Mr Sorbara did or did not do when he was a member of the Royal Group. It is not even so much what is going to be discussed in a very important budget to this province and to this Legislature some weeks or months from now. What has become the issue is Mr Sorbara. Just as much as the issue in the previous budget and the previous government was where it was held, at Magna corporation, and how that was wrong, the issue now of this budget has come down to whether Mr Sorbara should be presenting it.

I watched as the weeks went on. Probably 50 or 60 or 70 questions were asked day after day after day by members of the Conservative Party, the official opposition, trying to get to the bottom of this issue. It was all to no avail, because the answer was always the same: "The Integrity Commissioner has stated," and then the same answer is given again. It's given no matter what the question is. It's given no matter what the parameters of the question are, or the inflection, or which member is asking it. It's always the same: "The Integrity Commissioner says...."

My colleague the member for Toronto-Danforth attempted to take it out of this Legislature and to find some decent and honest answers that went beyond what the Integrity Commissioner had to say. She wrote a letter on March 7, and she wrote it to the clerk of the standing committee on general government. She asked but six important questions, and I'd just like to go through those questions to show that we are watching very carefully and we are very concerned about this Legislature, the members in it, and we are trying to uphold the highest possible ethical standards. I believe that Mr Sorbara is an honest man, and I would like to believe and I would hope that if the investigation was actually conducted as it should have been conducted, he would be found the same by us and by this Legislature and by the investigating bodies as he was by the Integrity Commissioner. But we will never know, because those questions have never properly been put.

I'm going to go through each one of the questions that my colleague from Toronto-Danforth asked.

First, "In the vetting process (personal transition disclosure) that is required for all potential cabinet ministers, did Mr Sorbara reveal all aspects of his relationship (including all shares and options) with Royal Group Technologies and its subsidiaries?"

We do not know that fact, to this day. We do not know whether or not, in the vetting process, this information was made available. It would be a very easy thing to answer and it should have been answered. If in fact he made that information available, that should have been kudos to him. If he did not, then that should have set off alarm bells. We will never know whether in fact that took place, because the committee determined that it did not want to hear it. I'm going to get to the committee later.

The second question was, "Were all proper procedures followed in placing assets related to Royal Group in a 'blind' management trust, as required under the Members' Integrity Act? More specifically, why did it take until December 23, two months after Mr Sorbara was sworn in as Minister of Finance—and one day after he was alerted by the OSC of their investigation into Royal Group—to establish the trust?"

That is a very legitimate question, because we have a time period here of some 66 days in which he knew the allegations against him and could have taken some action, and it appears that the only time that he was prepared to take any action whatsoever was after it was revealed. It would have said a lot more to me, quite frankly, had he disposed of this blind trust the first time it was made known and available to him. In fact, it would have made even more sense had he disposed of the blind trust when he was sworn into cabinet as finance minister in the first place. That question will never be answered, and was certainly not answered by the Integrity Commissioner.

The third question that needed to be asked: "Perhaps most importantly, was Mr Sorbara in a conflict of interest for the 66 days between the time he was informed by the OSC of the investigation on December 22, 2003, and the time he was relieved of his responsibilities from the OSC on February 26? More specifically, if there are securities law-related restrictions on a finance minister's ability to inform the Premier of an OSC investigation that he has been informed of, what are they?"

We do not know. The Integrity Commissioner did not reveal this information. In fact, he had no obligation to investigate this information; he had no obligation to report on this information. That is important to this House, to this Legislature, and to all of the people who are that things are done in this Legislature in an ethical, honest, upright and transparent way.

650

The fourth question: "How common a practice is it for the chair of the Ontario Securities Commission to give a 'heads up' to the Minister of Finance of the day of an ongoing OSC investigation? More importantly, is this appropriate behaviour on the part of the OSC chair?"

We do know from press reports, or believe it might reasonably have been the case, that Mr Sorbara was given the information by the OSC chair, and we really should know whether or not that was appropriate behaviour, not on the part of the finance minister, not on the part of the Premier, but on the part of a senior civil servant working at the Ontario Securities Commission.

We will never know, because that question was not allowed to be asked in the committee either.

Fifth, the question was asked: "The OSC and Mr Sorbara have made it clear that they assumed that Royal Group would issue a public release of the investigation within days of a December 22, 2003, OSC letter to Royal Group informing the company of the investigation. When the company refused to issue such a release, why didn't the OSC order the company to do so or go public itself? Aren't there provisions in the Ontario Securities Act that would allow the OSC to do so?"

Certainly the OSC's not acting as they should have, in my considerable opinion—or less than considerable opinion; I should put it that way. Should they have done what was necessary and correct in the circumstances of the case, they would probably have done Finance Minister Sorbara and the Premier a great deal of service, rather than sitting on this for a lengthy period of time. There will be no investigation of whether the Ontario Securities Commission acted in a proper way or whether they put the finance minister personally at risk.

Last but not least, the question was asked: "Mr McGuinty has said that were Mr Sorbara to come under investigation by the OSC, the RCMP, or Canada Customs, it would then be appropriate for him to resign. Mr Sorbara was a director and chair of the audit committee during the time under investigation. How does he know that he is not under investigation by one or more of these bodies?"

That question needs to be asked to this day. Nobody knows where these bodies are going with the investigation. Nobody knows what is happening, and the cloud continues to hang over a member of this Legislature, a member who is the finance minister and who will be coming down with a budget in about one month's time.

These are questions that should have been asked in committee. I was there in the committee with my colleague the member from Toronto-Danforth, two members of the Conservative caucus and six members of the Liberal Party, who sat on the other side. The questions were succinctly put. The argument was made that this was a better forum in which to deal with the allegations being made and the defences being made of Mr Sorbara than to bring it into the Legislature and, I would suggest, to bring it in the form of this non-confidence motion.

Instead, one of the members spoke on behalf of the committee. He used the words, and I quote, that he was "charged with the responsibility" of answering the allegations. We do not know to this day who charged him, because he said that was language he used in his other life as a municipal councillor. But as a municipal councillor for many years and as a former mayor, I do not remember anyone ever using the words "charged with the responsibility" unless they had been given that responsibility by a more senior person, whether that be someone in the bureaucracy or someone in the municipal government.

I would suggest that it just does not look good. It does not look good because the House leader had, some days

before that, made a statement on the radio in which he said the committee should not meet and should not hear the allegations. Of course, he rescinded that after it became general knowledge, and said it was not what he intended to say. But it is my belief that that was in fact what was intended, and that was in fact what the committee intended to do; that is, to kill this entire issue in committee.

But the issue itself will not go away. The issue cannot go away. The issue must not go away. The allegations have been made. The cloud hangs over a very capable and, I think, very personable member of this Legislature, one who is charged with the huge responsibility, in some four to six weeks' time, of bringing down a budget in extremely difficult circumstances, a budget that is going to have to find billions of dollars, a budget in which 230 promises are going to have to be met, as best those promises can be met, and a budget that is going to have to repair some of the wrongdoings of the party that was previously in power. But that is not what is going to happen on that day. He is going to be there and questions are going to continue to be asked, and will probably always be asked, about his relationship with Royal Group and the whole affair that led up to the non-confidence motion today.

I started by saying that this is a difficult circumstance I find myself in. I would suggest that the motion has perhaps been made prematurely. But it is the first opportunity of the official opposition party to raise it, and it has been raised. It is with some regret—I think I have tried to speak as cogently and dispassionately as I possibly could on this issue. The wrong decision has been made. The wrong decision that Mr Sorbara not step aside has been made by the Premier, by the committee, by colleagues in the Liberal Party and certainly by others who are supportive of that position.

This is not the parliamentary tradition we have come to expect. Even in the worst days of the Mike Harris government—and I want to tell you that there was probably no greater enemy of Mr Harris in this Legislature than me—his ministers, when called into question, were forced to resign. They were either exonerated and brought back in or not exonerated and kept out. In the short period of time I was here in the last Legislature with both Mr Harris and Mr Eves, I saw a number of ministers step aside. I saw Minister Runciman step aside, and I saw Minister Wilson step aside. I saw Mr Jackson leave, and he didn't come back. I saw Mr Gilchrist leave, and he did not come back. Mr. Hudak left and came back. They did what parliamentary tradition expected of them. In order to leave the government clean, in order to make sure that all the investigations were held and upheld, they stepped aside for the period of time that was necessary for the investigations to be conducted and for the honourable member to be cleared or not cleared.

As I said, I wish that had happened. I wish the finance minister had been cleared. I think he is honourable. He is certainly a gregarious and wonderful fellow. He's good fun, and I like him personally. But he should have

stepped aside. The Premier should have made him step aside.

This Legislature has the opportunity now. I am not naive. I know what the vote is going to be. But the members of the Liberal Party should do the right thing. If they're not going to vote for this, they should ask the Premier to reconsider and have him step aside for the good of this institution, for the good of this House and for the good of the people of Ontario.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): It really is a pleasure, believe me, to stand here today and respond to what the member from Beaches-East York, who just spoke, said was a premature resolution, at best.

I must say to the people who are watching that today is opposition day. This means that once a month the opposition gets a chance to determine the agenda for the afternoon, so they put forward a resolution in the hope of trying to embarrass the government. One of the functions of the opposition, of course, is to poke holes in policy weaknesses and one thing or another. But very often, if there's a negative mode, then it's to try to embarrass the government.

For the past three weeks, Mr Speaker, as you well know, relentlessly through question period every day—and I have to give the NDP some credit that they did get on to and address some other issues that are of concern to the people of Ontario—day in and day out, what did the Conservative opposition do? They hung on to this reed of desperation, trying to manufacture, theatrically—I'm sure the member from Nepean is taking acting lessons. I hope his mother gives him a little bit more money to continue taking them because it really isn't as effective as it might otherwise be.

It's clear that throughout that whole period nothing new came to light. The Premier's behaviour was totally appropriate. The ethics that ensued were transparent. They were confirmed by the Integrity Commissioner.

1700

Interjection: Twice.

Mr Patten: Twice, in two letters. The minister himself relinquished certain responsibilities to the Chair of Management Board and said, "If there's an investigation of me, I will step aside during that period of time." The member from Beaches-East York said, "Well, he should have stepped aside already. How do you know he's not being investigated?" It seems to me that if I were being investigated, somebody would talk to me and let me know, and suggest that they want to see some of my records or that they want to read my e-mails or whatever it was—but I'm keeping them in my pocket.

The investigation that is going on has to do with a company with which our Minister of Finance is no longer associated, and all of the ways in which he removed himself from any financial commitments and all of that the Integrity Commissioner confirms in a lengthy letter as to the procedures he followed and is satisfied he has done the right and appropriate thing.

I found it interesting that not many members talked extensively on the issue, because there really isn't all that

much to talk about, but they did want to talk about other issues, so I'd like to offer a few contrasting areas of what this government in a short six-month period has already done. I'll take on the words they use "in an ethical fashion" and I will explain myself.

For example, one of the ethical issues our government has dealt with: The Premier himself put this forward, actually as a private member's bill when he was in opposition, so it's long-standing in terms of the ethics of our Premier. We're talking of course about the self-promotional government advertising that was such an embarrassment to all of us on all sides of the House. I recall times when no matter where you were throughout Ontario, you would receive these mini-magazines that looked quite professionally done. As a matter of fact, they were very professionally done.

Interjection: Very expensive.

Mr Patten: And they were very expensive. Then there were surveys leading people to begin to think that serious crime has increased, even though in most categories of crime it's in fact on the decrease, leading into their next policy statement as to how you make sure you take kids off the streets, throw them in the clink and lock them up for a while—their particular approach to a lot of these things.

Legislation has gone in that prohibits that. That legislation would be able to be reviewed, decided upon and recommended by the auditor of the province. If the government of the day chose to proceed with advertising that was not deemed to be in the public interest, then that government party would have to pay the bill. I throw that out as a contrast to what was there before, the tens of millions of dollars that the Conservative Party, when they were in government, spent on something that was not in the public interest but was very self-serving.

I'll point to Ipperwash. An inquiry has been called. There are many questions about what happened that day and the role of the government in terms of what happened in the shooting of Dudley George. There's now an inquiry, an independent inquiry, I might add. The Attorney General has asked the commissioner to conduct a thorough and independent review. We want to get to the bottom of that. Many people from many parts of Ontario, let alone the family of Dudley George and friends, have written and asked that we look into this particular event and what the cause was of that.

We'll talk about another ethical event. This one is near and dear to my heart. It's when the government imposed on three school boards the supervisors who became dictators overnight, who replaced the duly-elected trustees from their particular communities—working for a measly \$5,000 a year, I might add, just to remind the people who may be following us—and replaced them with people who were very well provided for in terms of recompense, salaries, budgets for publicizing and promoting their particular views. They took unilateral decisions. That's not the Ontario way. This happened in Toronto, this happened in Hamilton and this happened in Ottawa, in the district boards.

Thank God for those trustees and those parents who hung in at those times, trying to save programs for their kids, when we know programs for kids with special needs were affected. We had to go to court in one particular area in our community, in Ottawa. The school board and the province lost—this was when the supervisor was there—in removing programs in order to maintain those. Congratulations to those trustees and parents who hung in there and fought for good-quality education and universal education across the board.

I am finished, my time is up, but I do want to say that I will be voting against this resolution. I am very proud to be on the side of Premier Dalton McGuinty and I'm very proud to be part of a team that includes our Treasurer, Mr Greg Sorbara, who is a very honourable man. This will all be disclosed and transparent, I hope, as soon as possible. When that day comes, I hope that some people will apologize for some of their remarks.

Mr O'Toole: It is my pleasure indeed to stand and discuss this confidence motion. Before I start, the member from Ottawa Centre is a very respectable member. Arguably, many on this side believe he was overlooked by Mr Sorbara when he appointed the cabinet, I believe, having been in cabinet, I think in 1985 to 1990. I think the whole issue here is clearly one of non-confidence, but more importantly, it is about integrity.

When I start to think of this whole debate, I really can't get over the election, to be honest. If I look at the election, I think of where the whole premise started here was the integrity of the 230 promises. I can tell you—I was a member of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs—and we were able to hunt out a secret document in which the Ministry of Finance staff costed the 230 promises. They refused, but we did pass a resolution. It's in the book. For those viewing, you can get that on the Ontario Web site. That shows that that resolution was voted down, and whipped down, I might say, by the Liberal members of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

A broader issue, when I think of Liberals—I don't want to be highly critical and too volatile—I sort of start with the older partner in this relationship, their kissing cousins from Ottawa. I think of the GST and the free trade. They said they were going to cancel that stuff. They promised, but they didn't do their promises.

At that time my son had just graduated from the RMC and he was a Sea King helicopter flying officer. The Sea King helicopters were supposed to be replaced by the Cormorant—I think was the helicopter that was replacing them. In fact, I think my son, in his training, had been part of that, maybe in England. It was cancelled. I read in the paper the other day that that promise still lives on. They're still government. They haven't replaced them. In fact, it's going to be eight years from now before it's actually replaced.

1710

It's not just the broken promises federally; it raises concern—that has been mentioned earlier. It raises suspicion, dare I say, if this is a parliamentary term. It

raises cynicism. The point has been made earlier: what is the message to our youth?

I think Howard Hampton, the leader of the third party, the official third party, said it earlier in some of his responses—when you are really not being clear and straightforward with the people of Ontario, whether it is on the Oak Ridges moraine land deal or the 407 tax, all these promises you make? Some have other terms for these promises, what I call broken promises. I can't use those because it's not parliamentary, I've been told, but the people of Ontario know. Howard Hampton pointed it out, with all due respect, and he does that day after day, as our leader, Mr Eves, does as well. The message here to the youth isn't the right message.

In the election, they had 230 promises. At the latest count—I have a little barometer—I think we're up to 20 broken promises, as I said before.

For those listening, our party is going to go through a leadership review here shortly. I think it is a very important opportunity for the people to reassess not the member from Whitby-Ajax, Jim Flaherty, or the member from Oak Ridges, Frank Klees—and it could arguably be Mr Watson, the Minister of Consumer and Business Services, possibly John Tory. John Tory's name has been in the press. I can convince you there will be an open and honest debate on this question.

But I think the real issue here—I have not been that upset with Dalton. He seems to vacillate, look down, a bit timid, and in that respect I think he's a nice fellow. I really do. I will say that openly in the House here. But he is certainly not a leader. That's the difference. We need someone who is able to lead during tough and difficult times.

To the people of Ontario, we are elected here—as you know, Speaker; you've been here for a number of years—to make the difficult decisions. Obviously, the promises you made would be difficult decisions. You found that out with Bill 8, and on your second round of hearings you will find out again that these promises or these trial balloons—I think of some of them that have outraged my constituents in the riding of Durham. Auto insurance is one. They're just struggling, all insurance: motorcycle insurance, commercial insurance. There's the Ontario drug benefit plan. Seniors, people on fixed income, are outraged by these trial balloons, these failed or fake promises—the trailer tax on people who can least afford it, the soup and salad tax. I said earlier today, it is the death of the McHappy Meal. This is really what I hear from a government that promised optimism and hope.

The real issue, though, does come down to the secret control guy, Mr Sorbara.

Mr Qaadri: Is there some secret agent conspiracy thing happening here?

Mr O'Toole: I wouldn't go quite that far. The member from Etobicoke North used the word “conspiracy”; I didn't. I am just getting it on the record here for him. He's thinking potentially there's a conspiracy. He may indeed be right. The member from Etobicoke North may

indeed be right. It is very hard to pin down exactly what they're going to do next.

But when Mr Sorbara speaks—I go back to Mr Martin and then Mr Manley. They're finance ministers, and I think Mr Sorbara is somewhat like them. He's from a fairly regal background, fairly well connected. He has his ships registered off in some country. Greg Sorbara is running some casino in St Kitts. They're of a different layer. We're in your face sometimes. Conservatives are too honest and too straightforward. But I would say to you that I'm not—I'm just saying, I'm thinking that the Conservatives are held to higher standards, as has been mentioned here. Mr Jim Wilson, as a minister, had the highest level of integrity and commitment, and Mr Runciman the same. I think back that they've paid the price, but they had the dignity and the integrity to do the right thing. What they didn't do was hide behind some Integrity Commissioner's letter. I have a copy of it here. It's worn out because they've used it so much. It's dog-eared; it's tattered.

In fact, that letter from the Integrity Commissioner was asked for before much of the information was on the record. I think the members have made the point today—one of the members who has made the point most eloquently today is the member for Beaches-East York—unprompted. He said, “Mr Sorbara has not followed ethical standards. It's a wrong decision by not stepping aside. We don't do things that way.”

This would be simple, this case of confidence wouldn't be before you, if Mr Sorbara would just step aside, even temporarily. We were criticized for having the off-site budget. You're going to have what I call the Greg Sorbara bogus budget, because a finance minister's main job is to do the economic forecasting and modelling. He is Chair of the audit committee, and he failed in that duty. In fact, he's failing in the duty here today. That leads me to have no confidence. I will be supporting this motion.

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I guess the best way to approach this is in a very rational, calm and perhaps subtle way, because what's in front of us today is a motion, a want of confidence, that has been put forward by the member from Leeds-Grenville, Mr Runciman, “That, in the opinion of this House, since the Premier has not adequately handled the conflict-of-interest allegations involving the Minister of Finance and has not followed the ethical standards promised in his throne speech, the government no longer has the confidence of this House.”

I can't support this at all. It flies in the face of everything that this government has done so far. What is very clear is that the Progressive Conservative Party is going through an anger phase. They're just angry that they've lost the election, and there is an element of denial as well in there. They still think they're the government, and they're not the government. On October 2, the people chose change. They chose to bring in a new government.

When I went and knocked on doors, people said to me, “Why are the Conservatives spending millions of dollars

putting your leader's face on the television screen and trying to make him look bad?" Instead of presenting their platform, they just attacked us. They hit below the belt, and they are continuing to hit below the belt. Again, not in an emotional way, but in a rational way, one would have to say, "Why are the Conservatives bringing forward this motion?" The only answer that I can understand—it's not that Ontarians want this motion or are truly upset at the Premier. Sure, there's a percentage that is going to be upset, and that's a small percentage. But the truth of the matter is, we've got a disorganized opposition group that is angry. They've been angry throughout the campaign. They've run a campaign of anger, a campaign of frustration, a campaign without any real policy or direction. Thank goodness they didn't get elected. If they had been elected, this province would be in a huge debt because they wouldn't be able to deliver on half the promises they put forward.

I can't support this motion today. It is extremely irrational. It is brought forward for no other reason, in my mind, than that there's a group of elected Progressive Conservatives who are angry, who can't find a real issue to discuss or debate, and who have decided to try to throw more dirt at the government and at the Premier. But at the end of the day, this dirt won't stay; the mud won't stick. The people will see through this, because ultimately what we're about and what governing is about is bringing forward policies, ideas, and implementing them.

1720

We've fulfilled a lot of our promises. The opposition has yet to acknowledge a single promise we've delivered on. Even the minimum wage one, which is so clearly in our platform and which we did, they won't admit to.

All they want to do is focus on half-truths and on emotional, angry responses, trying to embarrass the government instead of focusing on being a true opposition party that would provide proper criticism and proper opposition to this government. Instead they've taken the low road of taking shots at the government, and this is part of it. I can't support it. I hope it gets a real good hit today and is defeated very strongly. I cannot support it at all.

The Deputy Speaker: The member from Sault Ste Marie, Sudbury, no, Thunder Bay. I'm going to get the right part of the north. The honourable member from Thunder Bay-Superior—

Interjection: No, no.

The Deputy Speaker: Thunder Bay-Atikokan. It's been a long day, I'm sorry.

Mr Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): Mr Speaker, at least you had a northern riding.

It's my pleasure to rise today to speak against this motion. It's a bit of a surprise, I suppose, from my perspective that you would expect the members of the official opposition would bring forward a motion like this. When you do something like this, bring forward a motion like this, it simply provides an opportunity for the members of the government to shine back on them and

refocus the people of Ontario on their history during their time in government—not a very flattering light, I would suggest.

It's an opportunity that, as you can see, the members of our party are more than happy to undertake and not let slide by—a litany of activity that you would think they would not be too proud of. I was discussing this just earlier today with my 17-year-old son. When I told him what this motion was all about, his first reaction was, "Gee, dad, how can they do that? Did they forget about the budget already?" So there are people out there who are clued in to what they did. I'm surprised they provide us with this opportunity to speak about their time in government, but I thank them very much for the opportunity.

When I was thinking about the best place to start in dealing with the motion today, I thought the best place might be the Taxpayer Protection Act. The fundamentals of their motion are about honesty and integrity and ethics. We have today an opportunity to speak to their motion. One of the vehicles I'd like to use is to remind the people of Ontario about the Taxpayer Protection Act.

What do we know about it? I think it's a very relevant place to begin. Clearly the members of the official opposition for many years used their time in government to try and create and carve out a reputation with the people of Ontario as great fiscal managers. If you were to ask people why they would support that party, and not support the Liberals or the New Democrats, they would probably tell you that they thought they were better fiscal managers than either of the other two parties. I don't mind saying that during their time in government, they were somewhat successful in creating that illusion. They did a pretty good job of it. What we have found out since October 2, 2003, is quite a different story.

So where do we begin? We begin with a \$5.6-billion deficit. Please don't take my word for it. We have a third party, an objective number that came from somebody pretty highly respected in the province, the former Provincial Auditor, who provided that number for us. When we're talking about honesty and ethics and integrity, we remember that during the campaign they never missed an opportunity to tell the people of Ontario that they once again had balanced the budget. Well, what happened—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The din is growing a little in here. I'd like to hear the speaker. The honourable member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan.

Mr Mauro: Mr Speaker, I loved how you used that opportunity to get the riding correct. I appreciate that very much, for the Hansard.

Mr Speaker, I'm not sure, I'm new in this place and I don't know if the rules allow me to acknowledge my sister from Germany, Jamie Ann Mauro, who is visiting me. She just came in from Germany because she thought this issue was important enough for her.

Interjection.

Mr Mauro: Yes. I'm happy you noticed, and I'm comfortable that you noticed.

Interjection: What's your sister's name?

Mr Mauro: Jamie Ann Mauro is here from Germany. I'm happy to have her here.

Interjection.

Mr Mauro: Yes, she just made it in time.

A \$5.6-billion deficit, irrefutable, put forward by the former Provincial Auditor of the province clearly speaks directly to their ability. The fundamentals of their motion talk about integrity, honesty and ethics. That's what they say it's here for. They said at every opportunity during the campaign that they had balanced the budget once again—Taxpayer Protection Act stuff. I think it took about one year for the former Premier, then finance minister, Ernie Eves to break the Taxpayer Protection Act. He broke it. So now we have found a \$5.6-billion deficit. They never missed an opportunity to debate it.

Now we often hear the members from the other side of the floor shouting at us on this side of the floor, "Roll up your sleeves, get to work and balance the budget." I think we need to think about that for just a second, because implicit in that comment is an acknowledgement by the members of the official opposition that, in fact, there is a deficit that this government has to deal with. Every time they say that, I sit over here and say to myself, "Don't they realize what they're saying?" Before October 2, they never missed an opportunity to say the budget was balanced. Now they're telling us to deal with the deficit. Clearly, I don't know how they can do that. We're talking ethics, we're talking honesty. It's an incredible thing. They in fact acknowledge it. It's a very interesting thing.

I think, flowing from that, we can now understand why the famous Magna budget happened. In fact, the Magna budget was found to be contemptible not only by the members of the official opposition party and the third party at the time, but by the Speaker of the House, who just so happened to be a member of their party.

Interjection: And who's also a Liberal candidate.

Mr Mauro: Yes. They found it in contempt. It's an amazing thing.

I'm getting a note here that I have to wrap up shortly. I would have liked to have spent a little bit more time talking about the total debt, \$20 billion to \$22 billion, that they added to. They don't argue about the debt. When the economy was humming, when the provincial treasury was flush, when they were selling assets, they still managed to add \$22 billion to the debt. So much for your reputation as good fiscal managers. It's over; you've imploded. It doesn't exist any more.

I'd love to spend more time talking about what we found out at public accounts: untendered contracts; \$100,000 awards for a court rehab in this municipality that started at around \$100,000 and has morphed into something in terms of multi-millions of dollars. It just goes on and on and on.

I have a question. I'll wrap up with this, because my time is up. If you say, as a government, that you're never going to close a hospital in 1995, and all the members of your party support that platform, and then you close 30,

is that one broken promise or 30 broken promises? And they're worried about our 231.

I think we're doing terrifically. I'm happy to vote against this motion. I thank them for the opportunity to shine a light back on their time as the government of the day. I look forward to the vote.

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): Actually, I don't even think this motion deserves any debate at all. It shouldn't be dignified by debate in this House because, quite frankly, it's a joke.

The member for Leeds-Grenville spent quite a bit of time earlier ranting to the point of turning purple over there, waving his arms like mad. Then he sits down and says, "That feels good. I haven't done that for years." He's right. For eight years, he didn't represent the people of Ontario with that much passion or interest or concern. That became very evident. Then the member for Leeds-Grenville says I should represent my constituents. That is why I'm here. I'm here representing my constituents because they turfed you guys out on your ear, because you deserved to be turfed out on your ear after the performance—so you can't even be taken seriously, quite frankly, listening to the conversation in this House this afternoon that we've heard from that side.

Ipperwash, Walkerton, millions in untendered contracts to Tory pals of Harris and Eves—today we hear them pretending to care about the poor. They talk about a non-existent tax on lunches under \$4. What was the tax on that \$680 lunch that Mike Harris and Deb Hutton enjoyed at Canoe at the expense of the public purse? I would like to know. They should have choked on that lunch, and they should choke on the words coming out of them today.

1730

Now, about the parroting of this little line, this little broken-promises line: I'm astonished by the simplicity, the simplistic thinking of the opposition, especially since both of them have been in government before, that you're going to walk in and produce, overnight, 230 promises. We did not run simply on promises; we ran on a vision, on a direction, on integrity and hope, something that demoralized teachers and students, nurses and doctors, seniors and children, workers and volunteers desperately needed. I repeat: You can't be taken seriously on this. You were turfed out, and deserved to be turfed out, by many long-time Tories, in fact, who said, "We can't vote for these guys. These aren't Progressive Conservatives. They're not the people of Bill Davis or Bob Welch. They're not progressive at all; they're destructive." Again—Ipperwash, Walkerton, hydro, health care, education—your legacy is going to take a long time to fix, but we're going to do it. We will fulfill our vision over the period of the next four years. Our mandate is four years, and we will fulfill our vision, a vision that will see us provide reliable, dependable public services in an accountable manner, and we will do it while breaking the cycle of tax cuts, spend, deficit, tax cuts, spend, deficit that seems to come before every election.

Provincial politics, as we all know in here, is about parties. There are three parties in here. There is one

which I would not want to be a part of right now, although I have great respect for the predecessors of this party, but I don't find this group at all Progressive Conservative. The other one: I have a tremendous amount of respect for the ideology, the members and the hard work they do. I particularly enjoy listening to the member for Beaches-East York. But I would choose no other team in this House to be a part of but the one of which I am a part now: the Liberal Party. Seventy-three of us were duly elected in October and we do have the passion, the commitment, the creativity and the integrity to do the job right. I would like to see this House start to work a little bit more as a team and spend a little less time on petulant motions such as this one.

Mr Wilkinson: For all the members: chutzpah. If you want to see an example of chutzpah, then all you have to do is take a look at this non-confidence motion that the former government members decided to introduce into this House. It takes a lot of gall to come in here and lecture our government about issues of integrity and fiscal probity. Out in rural Ontario, where I'm from, everybody knows that if you whistle, you can't suck and blow at the same time. They have an interesting position about my good friend the Minister of Finance. They decided that the problem here is that the Integrity Commissioner doesn't have enough integrity. Isn't that odd? They decided the Integrity Commissioner, whom they appointed, does not have enough integrity—but he's cleared the good member.

We have a very important choice today. In a question of confidence, if this vote were to fail, if the government were to lack confidence in what we're doing for Ontario and force an election and, heaven forbid, the people who were here before us came back, what would happen to Ontario? First of all, we'd know they'd go back and fire water inspectors, fire meat inspectors and go back to spending good, hard-earned money on self-promotional government advertising. They would take \$50 million that we've given to nurses and they would cancel that. They would cancel \$50 million for nurses. They would not have an independent public inquiry on Walkerton. They wouldn't have that at all. If the government lost the confidence of this Legislature and we went back to the bad old days, there would not be a Walkerton. No wonder they want this government to be defeated.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Caroline Di Cocco): Order. I'd like to remind the members that there is a level of courtesy I would like to maintain in this chamber.

Again, the member for Perth-Middlesex.

Mr Wilkinson: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate your wise ruling.

I don't think this province wants to go back to seeing over \$100 million going to private schools. I don't think the province wants to see reckless corporate tax cuts reintroduced. I don't think the province wants us to get rid of the 17 new judges we've appointed in this province to get rid of a chronic backlog that we inherited. I don't think this province wants to see us go back to the days

when there weren't eight weeks of compassionate leave, which we've introduced so that people would have an opportunity to look after their loved ones. I don't think the good people of Ontario would want to see the minimum wage rolled back.

That's why I urge all my members to vote against this non-confidence motion.

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I did not plan to speak on this, but I don't have a choice after hearing the comments that some members, both from the PC Party and the NDP, have made in this House. Let me say that I am a proud MPP. Royal plastic in my area of Thornhill is a company that I believe employs about 6,000 employees all over the world.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. There are a number of conversations going on simultaneously and they are really reaching a level where I am having a difficult time hearing the member. I would appreciate it if the conversations that are carried on are done so with courtesy to the speaker.

Mr Racco: Speaker, I thank you. I find it offensive that there are members elected in this House who are making statements that are potentially questionable, and instead of listening to other people's comments, they go and have their own meetings.

Let me say that this company, which employs about 6,000 employees worldwide, has a number of them in my area. Certainly I am a little concerned. When we have a company, Royal plastic, that exports worldwide and that has a head office in Ontario, I thought this House would be honourable enough to support such a company instead of undermining it.

Mr Yakabuski:—shut down the investigation.

Mr Racco: Speaker, the gentleman should listen. It's my turn now. When it's your turn, you may speak on the matter.

This company has billions of dollars in sales.

Interjections.

Mr Racco: If they allow me to speak, let me remind people that this company has billions of dollars every year in sales in Ontario. Those sales are made worldwide and the people of Ontario benefit with jobs and taxes. I am concerned that some of my constituents may lose their jobs because of the comments that are taking place.

I believe some members in this House are abusing the power this House has. If they believe what they are saying to be the truth, I would challenge them to go outside of the House and make those statements so that those people affected can take proper legal action.

I am at a loss that the NDP, which speaks about jobs, is in fact helping to potentially lose jobs in Ontario. I am also at a loss when the PCs, who have given billions of dollars that belong to the people of Ontario to corporations, now are potentially taking down an Ontario corporation with a head office in Ontario. I think it's disgraceful. I believe Ontario corporations should be promoted and should not be undermined. I believe that partisan politics are understood, but when we take down

an Ontario corporation, I think we are doing a disservice to all the people.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Racco: We were elected to represent Ontarians. This is not what we should do to represent Ontarians. The courts will make a decision, but this House should not abuse a corporation or a person who cannot defend himself.

1740

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I certainly agree with my colleague from Thornhill. The people of Ontario are worried—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Excuse me. I'd really like to restore some order. It's difficult for me to hear the speaker. If there are conversations that are that important and have to reach a certain level, I would ask that members take them outside. Thank you.

Mr Colle: Again, I certainly concur with my colleague from Thornhill, who said the people of Ontario have sent us here to do their work, because there's much work to be done. The people of Ontario have said to us very clearly that they want their schools rebuilt and their hospitals and their health care system re-established. They want our cities to prosper again. They want small towns and small communities in rural Ontario to get their bridges fixed.

I know it doesn't sound too interesting to the opposition, but as we travelled across this province, over and over again we got, "You know, for eight years the previous government abandoned us. All they did was download all these services on us, and we can't even repair our bridges." This is what the people of Ontario, whether in Thornhill or East York or Thunder Bay-Atikokan, were telling us. They said, "Get in there, roll up your sleeves and improve this great province. Bring it back to the glory it once had."

You can see that they are depending on us to deliver a budget that's going to respond to those needs. They don't want us to waste our time and their time diverting attention from the job at hand. This motion is another attempt by the previous government, the members who are left, to divert attention from the work at hand. The work at hand is challenging, because we know they did not take care of bread-and-butter issues and they spent like drunken sailors.

Look at the OPG boondoggle. You want to talk about integrity in government, but I didn't hear one member of the opposition talk about the \$40-million bonus given to that dream team that came up from the States. Can you imagine what we could have done with that \$40 million in salaries by giving it to small communities in rural Ontario? Do you know what they did with the money instead? Seventeen million dollars was for a lump sum pension payout to one member of this dream team. Part of the team's job was to restore mothballed Pickering. They spent \$3 billion and Pickering is still not working. They went on and on.

One of the members of the dream team, Carl Andognini, received \$11.8 million in compensation—they still don't want to hear about it. They don't want this Parliament to talk about the OPG boondoggle of \$3 billion. They don't want us to talk about the mess they left in Walkerton. They don't want to talk about the fact that they stonewalled Ipperwash for eight years. Those are the things they don't want to talk about. They don't want to talk about what they did to our local hospitals and what they did to home care. They don't want that to be on the agenda. Instead, they want to divert attention to issues that the Integrity Commissioner has ruled on twice.

During the past eight years, when there were rulings by the Integrity Commissioner, we moved on. When Justice Coulter Osborne or other members of the Integrity Commission made rulings, we moved on to the business at hand. Instead, the opposition has no ideas, no vision, no proposals. They have nothing to offer so they want to divert attention to anything they're desperately thrashing around about, and that's what we have today. Instead of presenting a motion dealing with real bread-and-butter issues—What's happening to our agricultural communities? What's happening to property tax assessment? What's happening to auto insurance?—they don't want to talk about it. Look at the mess they created in auto insurance. For eight years they allowed auto insurance rates to go up 43%. They did nothing. They don't want to talk about auto insurance. They want to divert attention.

My colleagues, we have much work to do. The people of Ontario have said to us, "Fix auto insurance, fix the bridges, fix the hospitals, help people in nursing homes." They ignored the seniors in this province for eight years. They don't want to talk about the plight of our seniors.

We are committed to trying to undo the damage. The damage is deep and wide. The damage left by the previous government is seen in every community, whether it's in rural Ontario, Hamilton or Leamington.

The legacy of the OPG boondoggle, the dream-team solutions—we even paid these American consultants \$40 million to move back to the States. We even gave them pensions. They worked for two years and they got a \$1-million pension for working for two years. That's what they don't want to talk about. They don't want to talk about the secret contract they gave Paul Rhodes. They don't want us to mention that. They don't want to talk about the secret contract they signed with Tom Long, who got over \$1.4 million. Instead, they want to try to dig up something the Integrity Commissioner has already ruled on twice.

We on this side of the House do not underestimate the challenge. We know how much work there is to do. We know the deficit that was left behind. In fact, the former government doesn't even acknowledge there is a deficit. They still refuse to listen to the people of Ontario. In the last election they got thrown out because they didn't listen. They're still not listening. All they want to do is try to espouse the economic policies of a washed-up government. They're a washed-up group with washed-up ideas.

We on this side have some new ideas. We have some change to offer, we have hope to offer, but we can't do it in six months and we can't do it if they continue to try to obstruct the work of this government and this House. It's legitimate to debate, but it is not legitimate not to listen to the people of Ontario.

The people of Ontario said very clearly: "Take care of my job, take care of my city, take care of my hospital and my school." That's what they told us. We're not about phony Magna budgets, we're not about OPG boondoggles; we're about getting back to basics, fixing, mending and repairing this great province and making the people of this province feel once again that they're getting a good bang for their tax dollar. They don't want their tax dollars to go to some American consultant who gets a \$2-million pension to go back to the States. "Put the money into our local communities, put the money into our hospitals, not into these consultants who came up here and said, 'Boy, these people in Ontario are an easy mark.'" We're not going to be marks like you were.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke will come to order.

Mr Runciman has been moved that, in the opinion of this House, since the Premier has not adequately handled the conflict of interest allegations involving the Minister of Finance, and has not followed the ethical standards promised in his throne speech, the government no longer has the confidence of this House.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1750 to 1600.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will stand one at a time and be recognized by the Chair.

Ayes		
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Churley, Marilyn	Martel, Shelley	Runciman, Robert W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wilson, Jim
Eves, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Yakubski, John
Flaherty, Jim	Murdoch, Bill	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will stand one at a time and be recognized by the Chair.

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerard	Racco, Mario G.
Broten, Laurel C.	Kular, Kuldip	Ramal, Khalil
Brown, Michael A.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Bryant, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Sergio, Mario
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Smitherman, George
Craitor, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Sorbara, Greg
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Oraziotti, David	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Parsons, Ernie	
Fonseca, Peter	Patten, Richard	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 17; the nays are 64.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Before I adjourn the House, and after the vote, I want to express an opinion from the Chair. Something happened today that I haven't seen in 10 years in this place. I don't know who led it, but Mr Runciman, it was your motion. You know from all of your experience that this should not have happened. Any of you sitting with these T-shirts on who has an ounce of respect for this place wouldn't have worn them. The next time something like this happens—

Mr Wilson: We used to wear buttons all the time.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Simcoe-Grey, order. The next time something like this happens, the Chair will not see you.

This House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1805.

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Formation par apprentissage

M. McNeely



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Thursday 15 April 2004

Jeudi 15 avril 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 15 April 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 15 avril 2004

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

ONTARIO FARMS

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I move that, in the opinion of this House, members of the Legislative Assembly should spend one day a year on a farm and report back on their experiences.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr Leal has moved ballot item number 11. Pursuant to standing order 96, the member has 10 minutes.

Mr Leal: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I'm happy to have the opportunity today to stand before you and speak to this resolution that I've brought forward. The Members' Back to the Farm Day resolution would encourage MPPs to spend one day a year on a farm in their riding. For those MPPs who represent strictly urban constituencies, I propose that they partner with an MPP from a rural riding to visit a farm for a day.

Earlier this year, a group of local farmers from Peterborough county approached me with the idea to do this. The premise is very similar in nature to our education minister's MPP back-to-school program. We've all been out of the school system for many years, and the experience allows us to see how schools have changed and adapted over the years. The same is true for farming.

This province was founded on the farms of our ancestors, who committed to back-breaking work to clear the land and to raise crops and livestock. This tradition is continued today. The province's agricultural industry and its related processing sector are worth \$22 billion and employ 600,000 Ontarians. However, population shifts have left many Ontarians leaving their family farms for urban centres. In today's world, children grow up in cities, rarely venturing into rural areas. Increasing pressures on farms have in part caused this exodus. Farming is an extremely tough livelihood. Changes in weather or a flare-up of disease can be devastating. Yet farmers must be optimistic and confident that growing conditions will co-operate.

Many city folk don't realize what farmers and the agricultural industry go through to get food to their tables. We need to return our attention to our rural roots. We need to get MPPs back on the farm so they can see

what farmers deal with on a daily basis. To further this experience, MPPs can then report back to the House and their constituents.

I can tell you I have had nothing but positive responses to this motion, which tells me of the need for recognition of the ag sector we have here. I have also had the support of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, which represents more than 39,000 farm families and more than 36 commodity organizations. Just yesterday I received a letter, and I want to read it in the record:

"The Ontario Federation of Agriculture is pleased to support your 'Back to the Farm Day' resolution encouraging members of the Ontario Legislative Assembly to spend one day a year on the farm and report back on their experiences.

"Although farmers are one of the top three most trusted professions in Canada, Ontario farmers have encountered confusion and ambivalence from governments, urban consumers and others due to their conflicting feelings and opinions about the romantic vision of the farmer and the practical realities of farming.

"The OFA is working hard to address this by communicating farmers' efforts at running efficient, technologically advanced, environmentally sound businesses that fill an important economic and social role in Ontario.

"Ontario depends on its farmers not just to grow and provide food, but also to work as the responsible caretakers of the largest part of this province's land base.

"Ontario's landscape is beautiful and reassures every person in Ontario that the land supports them. The outlook and independence of Ontario's residents rests on their knowledge that they have the freedom to make choices because the abundance of the farmland is supporting them. The new immigrant family in Toronto can think about their own business for next year, because they know they can afford to eat today. Most citizens of Ontario can enjoy their standard of living for the very same reasons.

"That Ontario farming has come this far is owing to the hard work, careful planning and care given to our bountiful resources. Farmers did not do this alone. In the past, farmers were supported by their governments, their customers and fellow citizens. As many people are now generations away from a family farm, we must work to ensure that the future of farming and farm families is guided by our successful past.

"I want to thank you for your resolution. The OFA is encouraged by the interest of the Legislative Assembly in farmers and farming. We would be pleased to facilitate

any such farm visits, and ask that MPPs to call on us for this.

"A farm visit will go a very long way to informing the important work legislators have in their decision-making and their policy development. This important work should never be done in a knowledge vacuum. The more our elected representatives know about the diversity, economic importance and community support provided by farmers, the more informed their policy development will be. There has never been a prosperous, stable and flourishing society that depended on others for its food.

"Once again, thank you.

"Sincerely,

"Ron Bonnett, President," Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Agriculture in Ontario is facing some tough times. Small family farm operations are facing tremendous pressure to expand while the costs and demands placed on farmers are continually growing. Increased costs associated with farming results in a lack of profit margins for our farmers and, at the same time, consumers are continuously insisting on low prices and high-quality products, with farmers ultimately bearing the burden.

Farmers are facing many issues today, including the enforcement and the related costs of the Nutrient Management Act, the increase of electricity costs, source water protection and BSE recovery. Farmers have worked hard to put together strategies to protect these interests.

Farmers rely on the environment for their livelihood. Environmental plans and nutrient management plans go a long way toward protecting farmers, the environment and consumers. In fact, more than 24,000 farms have used the environmental farm plans to identify on-farm risks to ground and surface water.

1010

However, it is getting increasingly difficult for farmers to manage their management plans, which can include on-farm food safety, medicated feed, pesticide management, traceability measures and animal welfare. Perhaps, as the OFA suggested, these plans could be streamlined for a more efficient approach to farm management.

Rural Ontarians have been proactive in their approach to innovative ideas for power generation as electricity costs rise. At a recent conference in my riding in Peterborough, the Ontario Rural Council hosted a forum on alternative energy sources. One of the ideas discussed involved wind turbines that could be placed in farmers' fields. Farm sources would be placed on the power grid. Farmers and Ontarians could benefit, and excess generation could also be sold to the province.

Even the issue of wildlife damage adversely affects farmers. Crop predation by animals such as birds, deer and raccoons results in significant losses for farmers. The OFA estimates that in 1988, wildlife damage resulted in the loss of about \$41 million for farmers. However, farmers are working with the Ministry of Natural Resources to develop policies for a manageable and controlled wildlife population.

But perhaps one of the toughest blows Ontario farmers have taken in the last year is the fallout of the discovery of BSE in Alberta. A subsequent drop in cattle prices has led to the loss of markets, destroying farm income for Ontario's 28,000 cattle producers and about 5,000 sheep, goat and deer producers. This has translated into a loss of about \$4.13 million for Ontario's cattle producers. Compensation programs introduced by our provincial government and previous governments, as well as the federal counterpart, have offset this loss by approximately \$3 million.

On March 23, in an open letter to all MPPs, OFA President Ron Bonnett wrote, "Recently, I visited with farmers across Ontario. In my years working with Ontario and Canadian farmers, I have never seen such a high level of frustration and anger among farmers as I see now. OFA's service and advocacy work on behalf of individual farmers and their families has increased tremendously since this time last year. Our offices are getting many desperate calls from desperate farm families."

Bonnett adds, "For the first time in recorded history, the collective net farm income in Canada is negative! This means that all agricultural sectors are in serious trouble."

I hosted a prebudget town hall meeting in Peterborough on March 25, and the priority that participants found sorely lacking was the support for rural Ontarians. Surprisingly, many of the town hall participants were city dwellers. It was refreshing to see that they recognized the need to help our farmers. However, I can say I'm fortunate to live in a unique riding. Peterborough is a blend of urban and rural. The city of Peterborough is a hub surrounded by small villages and farms. Time and time again, the resolve and spirit of the people within these farming communities amazes me.

To maintain our rural communities, small and new farming operations need to be preserved. It is my hope that this resolution will work toward that goal and bring much-deserved recognition to Ontario's farms. Many city folk don't realize what farmers and the agricultural industry go through to get food to the table.

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr Leal: We need to return to our roots, and I think this is the resolution to help us do it.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I am certainly pleased to rise today. Because I come from a mixed riding of urban and rural, in principle the member from Peterborough—I knew his predecessor very well: Gary Stewart, who was a very strong advocate of the farming community there. The resolution is to spend one day a year on a farm and report back on their experiences, and I think the intent and the spirit of what the member is trying to accomplish here is worthwhile. The Simcoe county agricultural federation in my riding has a day every year where they invite the members from Simcoe county—Jim Wilson, Garfield Dunlop and myself—I have been doing this since 1995—to attend and

visit a number of farms over the course of a day, whether it's a cattle farm, a dairy farm, a hog farm, a corn farm or whatever specialty they're in. We go there and visit each farm and deal with each of the farmers and the questions that they have for their specific area. Then we meet later at a host farm and have a barbecue and further discussions with the Simcoe county federation.

I can tell you, having done that for eight to nine years, that we are in touch with what's going on. That's something the federation puts on. I don't know what the definition of spending one day is, whether that's an overnight trip, whether it's 24 hours, or whatever the member is proposing here. We might want to be a little bit definitive, but certainly it is—

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): A spiritual day.

Mr Tascona: That's right. The member from Oak Ridges says "a spiritual day." I think a lot of the farmers out there are very strongly religious, because of the nature of the business they're in.

They have really been under pressure over the last few years. If it wasn't dealing with the difficulties we're having at the US border with cattle and the farmers who are now having difficulty out in British Columbia with respect to chickens, there were difficulties with respect to the weather conditions that farmers had been facing, especially in my riding, because we have a nice diverse mix of it.

Bradford West Gwillimbury, which is the southern part of my riding, has marsh farmers. Everyone knows about the Holland Marsh and the support we get from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture. The fruit growers have put on a number of events there with respect to bringing awareness to what they're doing in encouraging the fruit growers and the marsh farmers in terms of the work that has to be done to keep the soil productive, and also dealing with the phosphates, the issue that we have with Lake Simcoe. Lake Simcoe is a big issue in my riding. Certainly it's impacted significantly by the phosphates and what goes into Lake Simcoe through that area. Whether it's in Sutton or down in Bradford West Gwillimbury, the runoff has an impact. Those are issues that face the farmers in that area.

I have met with farmers in my riding over in Bond Head. Whether they're growing carrots or they're growing corn, they have issues. They had issues, certainly, with the Ministry of the Environment in terms of what their definition is of runoff. I know there were a number of disputes and discussions in terms of an understanding—not a sufficient understanding—by the Ministry of the Environment of what farmers do and what they have to face in terms of dealing with their product.

These are not just small farmers. The ones I met when we were dealing with issues with respect to crop protection are farmers with 800 to 900, minimum, acres—up to 2,000 acres in terms of their operation. They're big operations. Those are found throughout my riding, particularly in Innisfil, which is a very rural area but is coming under pressure with respect to development.

I've queried the Minister of Municipal Affairs on this moratorium in Bill 27 which is supposed to cover the

Golden Horseshoe. I have asked him directly whether that particular moratorium, which affects agricultural land—and the member from Peterborough may want to ask him the same question—impacts Simcoe county. His response—and I had read the bill—was, "No it doesn't impact it." In other words, it wouldn't be covered by the moratorium.

Having read the bill, I just don't know where the minister is getting that information, because he hasn't got any exemptions with respect to certain areas. So I'm a little bit confused, as are other people in my riding, as to whether the moratorium with respect to Bill 27 affects Simcoe county and whether agricultural land is frozen for a year in terms of whether it can be rezoned. I have not got an answer from the Minister of Municipal Affairs on that.

It's important, because there are farms being bought up in Innisfil with respect to potential residential development. Certainly, the area is going to grow. There is no doubt about it. But it's typical, in terms of the impact of urbanization, the location of Toronto and the GTA that will have on rural areas such as mine. I would say that Simcoe county is rural in nature. In particular, the member for Simcoe North, Oro-Medonte, is in a very strong cattle-raising, dairy farming area. Jim Wilson's area, which is in Simcoe-Grey, is a very vibrant rural area. In my riding in Cookstown there is a cattle auction which has done very well since it was opened; I think it was in the latter part of the 1980s or the early 1990s when it opened and to service the area. The rural nature of my area, when you have a mixed area—I know the member for Peterborough would, because Peterborough is a city, and with the rural area around that there is a real mix in terms of issues that you face from an urban area versus a rural area and trying to balance that off, especially when you have a fast-growing area such as mine, in Barrie, which is almost built out with respect to development, and areas such as Innisfil and Bradford West Gwillimbury that are growing.

1020

There are interesting developments that are happening there. There is one situation in Bond Head where there is a development proposal. I think the population of Bradford West Gwillimbury is around 14,000 people and there's a development proposal there for almost 50,000 people just outside Bond Head. I don't know how that will ever happen when you consider that there is only water to service about 37,000 people. Those are the challenges the government is going to face.

I can tell you that if they're looking at Bill 27 in terms of stabilizing urbanized growth, those are the challenges they're going to have with respect to farms as we go through this growth phase. We also have that in development projects not only in Innisfil, but the project that's slated for 3,200 units off Big Bay Point, which is subject to a very large meeting this week. We had, in Oro-Medonte, a large public meeting with respect to another development that is being proposed out there.

The challenge for the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Municipal Affairs is how they are going to

balance the interests of their rural members with their urban members, looking at a balance of growth and a balance with respect to maintaining agriculture. If the member for Peterborough really believes what he says, then he'll have to have some input into his government's plans with respect to growth. The growth that's going to happen out there is only to come at the backs and at the acreage of the family farm; there's no doubt about that. There are challenges for that member there, because essentially the Liberal Party in government is very urbanized into large urban centres, as opposed to our caucus which is much more into rural areas. But respecting that—I think you have to look at it—there is a balance.

Interjection.

Mr Tascona: The member from Ancaster is trying to offer me a few tidbits. Maybe he'll stand up and speak on this bill. We'll be looking for them. Maybe the member from Peterborough will offer him the opportunity, since he wants to interrupt me while I debate.

I would say that the member's intent is important because of the issues facing family farms in terms of nutrient management, source water, the phosphates that come off the farm, the Ministry of the Environment in terms of what they're going to deal with, but also the impact of urbanization as it infringes on the family farm in terms of doing business, and they're saying, "We don't want you to do your business because it is affecting how we live in an urbanized centre." That really becomes a major issue. Certainly this is similar, in a way, to the Minister of Education's always espousing, "Go to a classroom and visit school for a day and then report back on your experiences." The member from Peterborough is bringing that little lesson to the rural area about spending a day on a farm—and we still haven't determined whether it's a day visit or a nighttime visit or whatever—and then reporting back on our experiences. I don't know how he wants us to report back on our experiences, whether he wants a report to the House or a report to him.

When the Minister of Education was in opposition, he always wanted to make sure we were going to the schools. I have four children in school and I didn't really need any lessons from him in terms of what was going on in the schools, but I can tell you that it is important. If you're a good member, you'll want to visit the places that you think are important. Obviously, going to a school and understanding how it operates is important. Going to a farm and understanding how it operates, and their issues, is important. What the member is saying here is that it's important that we understand that farmers have issues. We have to face those issues. If you're not in a rural area, you have greater challenges because you're going to have to get out there to understand what they're going through as opposed to just going with what you're facing in an urban area.

That's all I have to say on this. I wish the member well.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Thank you. I want to—

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me. There is a rotation here, so I'll try to keep to it. The member for Perth-Middlesex.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'm delighted to speak to this motion and I want to congratulate my colleague the member for Peterborough for bringing this forward today. This is of vital interest to so many members from all parties in this House.

The thing that I've said to farmers in my riding—I might preface it by saying that Perth-Middlesex, my riding, is the most productive agricultural riding in the Dominion. There may be other rural members here who would dispute that, but I have been told many times by our friends from the Perth County Federation of Agriculture and from Middlesex that we're very productive. I'm quite proud of that and I'm always willing to stand in this House and be proud of that fact.

As we all recall, 100 years ago Ontario was a rural province. It was dominated by members who came here from rural Ontario because the province itself was rural, but now it isn't. Now the province is primarily urban. That's why it is so important that urban members take one day of the year to get out to what is the second-largest industry in this province: agricultural and agri-food.

For farmers there are two things: There's pride and there's pain. There is pride in being a farmer. Farming is not a job, farming not a profession; farming is a vocation. I truly believe that to be a farmer you are called to it. You are called to it because of family tradition in many instances, but you have it in your heart. You wouldn't farm because you thought it was a job; you have to have it in your bones. It's bred into your bones, and it's a vocation that we have to cherish in this province.

I come from a long and illustrious line of pen-pushers. Though I am the representative for Perth-Middlesex, my grandfather was a trust officer, my father is a chartered accountant and I'm a certified financial planner. I'm one of four boys and I grew up in Trenton, which is a small town in the heart of rural eastern Ontario. There was no way that my father was going to allow his four sons to be lounging around all summer with nothing to do. Being a chartered accountant, of course he knew many farmers, and so off we'd go to dutifully spend some time on the farm.

My very first job, when I was 14 years old, was on a cattle farm, the farm of Roger and Pat Laferty, and I must admit it was wonderful for me. It gave me an appreciation of a life I had heard of but hadn't experienced. I remember distinctly that there were three things I learned. I showed up on the first day, 14 years old, all full of vim and vitality, and it was a rainy day, so we were out in the implement barn and the chaps were sitting around: Roger Laferty, who owned the farm, and two of his hired hands. Being personable even at that early age, I started by saying that farming must be a great job because you have the winters off.

My, my, they decided that I had to learn a few lessons about farming, that it wasn't a just a summer job. We

built a hay wagon that day because it was raining, and they had me do the hammering. So dutifully I got on to the wagon and started hammering away. Of course, I didn't want to hurt myself. I thought they would find it quite amusing if I were to actually smash my thumb, so I worked diligently and made sure that I would not hurt myself. After about five minutes, my arm was ready to fall off. After they figured that I had done enough time in purgatory, one of the farmers, Roger, came over to me. He gave the nail a little tap, lifted up and let the hammer fall. He did that twice, and the nail was done. He explained to me something that I learned then and I've always known from then on: You let the hammer do the work.

1030

The other thing that I learned was, because it was a cattle farm—and being from town, we would go on about cows. I would call all these cattle “cows.” They explained to me that they weren't cows; they were steers. Being 14, of course I referred to them as bulls. They explained to me that, no, they were steers. Being a neophyte, I said, “What's the difference?” For a 14-year-old young teenage boy, that was an eye-opening experience to find out about the difference between a bull and steer. I think that will always stick with me.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): What is it? Tell us what it is.

Mr Wilkinson: I tell the member for Toronto-Danforth that it had to do with an elastic band, and these things just fall off after a time.

The other thing I want to mention is that I was meeting with the Perth Federation of Agriculture and we were having a discussion about how this is an urban province and it's incumbent on those of us in the minority in rural ridings to reach out to urban members. I know that my own federations have agreed to have a day, which we're working on, where all the urban members will be invited out to Perth-Middlesex. We're going to have a day on the farm. We want you to bring your families; we'll have a barbecue and we're going to allow our members to drive the great big tractors and combines, and get a real feel for what we do out in Perth-Middlesex. I look forward to that day and the support that I've received.

I am proud to support the member for Peterborough and his insightful resolution. I think it will go a long way to moving the interests of rural Ontario to the forefront of this place.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Northumberland.

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): It's an honour to—

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me, no. It's early in the morning. Could the member take his seat? I'll see if I can recognize the members in rotation first. It's your turn, member for Toronto-Danforth.

Ms Churley: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I do think it's important that an urban member speak to this resolution. I don't know if many others are. I have the Riverdale Farm in my community of Toronto-Danforth, and that is,

in fact, the only opportunity for some children growing up in the city to actually get a little experience of seeing baby lambs and baby pigs being born and all of those kinds of things. It really enriches our city.

I just have to say that I support this resolution. I think it's really important. All of the members here who were elected from rural areas come to live in the city, at least part of the time, and you get an opportunity to see what the problems are in the city and what works in the city, and you have an idea when we urban members stand up and start calling for more money for public transportation and all of those kinds of things. But the opposite doesn't happen. The urban members really don't get the opportunity to go out to the rural areas or a farm and see firsthand how it all works and what the problems are there. I can tell you that, even though I represent an urban area, some of you know that I come from Newfoundland and Labrador. I grew up in Labrador—I come from a fishing family in Newfoundland—and witnessed over time—although I'd left home by then—the demise of the fishing industry in Newfoundland. I saw some of my relatives there just devastated. To some extent, I see similar things happening now with the family farm, with all of the issues that other members talked about and are facing today, with all of the new things we've learned about the environment and all of the problems that farmers have to face, all the things they are expected to take care of and fix.

Often they are abandoned. We bring in new laws. For instance, the previous government brought in, after the Walkerton incident—and let me say here that from time to time it sounds as though people may be blaming the farmer on whose farm that well was situated, which ended up being discussed at the Justice O'Connor inquiry. I just want to make it clear again that, if anybody still believes that it was that farmer's fault, I disavow them completely of that. Justice O'Connor was very clear in his report that the farmer—and it was a small farm—had done everything right. He in fact had his environmental plan and all of the other plans but, as we found out from the inquiry, it was a failure of both the municipal government and the Koebel brothers involved in that, plus the existing government. There were a whole bunch of reasons that came together, a whole bunch of circumstances that caused that. It wasn't the farmer's fault. It's really important that we remind people that on the whole farmers are doing their very best to keep up with all of the new environmental laws and standards and things that are thrown at them, and they understand essentially how important those are. We are in that situation now.

I'm sure every member here received an open letter from the Ontario farmers, from Mr Ron Bonnett, the president. I think it's a very polite letter. We get less polite letters when people are looking to government for help and assistance, but if you read that letter, it's very clear that they find themselves “in dire situations,” as he puts it, “due to BSE, the high Canadian dollar and the general disregard for the harsh realities of today's farm

business issues by elected officials and consumers alike.” He talks about the desperation that particularly the small family farms—I believe he’s referring to—are feeling. He’s saying:

“For the first time in recorded history, the collective net farm income in Canada is negative! This means that all agricultural sectors are in serious trouble.”

I believe it is easy for us to sit around here and discuss all kinds of new legislation and all kinds of new regulations and rules that have a big impact on farmers without really recognizing and understanding their day-to-day lives and the implications of what these new laws can mean to them. That’s why I think this is a good resolution. I don’t know what the punishment will be if people don’t make it to the farm—and I don’t know if Riverdale Farm in my riding will count—but I do believe that it is really important, particularly for urban members, to get out to the farm and see how it works.

It reminds me of when I first became, before I came to this place, a city councillor. At the time, there were lots of discussions, as there are now, about infrastructure deficits and problems. I got on the works committee, as it was known then. People made fun of me a little bit, but one of the first things I did was I got suited up and went down into the sewers. Yes, I went down into the sewers—and I won’t talk about this place in that context. I went down and had a really good look around and saw for myself. I talked to the workers who were trying to maintain that aging system and saw what was really going on there. It certainly helped me, when we had further discussions about what needed to be done, to understand what those issues really were.

I would suggest that that’s something we all do as well. Of course, we could add on a number of things. We should go and see how cars are made and go down into the sewer systems and see what the real problems are. I guess that could take up too much of our time, but I think it’s really important for politicians, elected officials to actually see first-hand. That, I believe, will enhance our role and make us more understanding when we stand in this place and talk about and discuss new legislation and pass legislation.

1040

I know that the member knows, and he mentioned it himself, that there are all kinds of issues about some of the new environmental laws, many of which are a result of what happened in Walkerton. We also know that the farmers want to comply with that legislation, but they do need some help. When I asked the Minister of the Environment yesterday about, for instance, helping small municipalities with the new water regulations and those kinds of things, the answer seemed to imply—at least the first part of her answer—that a new law that was brought in by the previous government would mean they would have to cover all those costs themselves. That is a really serious issue.

I know the member for Peterborough mentioned the Nutrient Management Act. All of those kinds of things—that one in particular, but the Source Protection Act as

well—will have a huge impact on those farmers, small and big. It may be easier for what we refer to as factory farms or whatever you choose to call them, the larger industrial farms, to comply, but for the small family farm it can be an overwhelming burden. We know it is an overwhelming burden. They need the assistance of the government, to make sure they bring in those laws. They can’t be abandoned to try to find that money themselves, because in many cases we are going to lose, as I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks.

I believe, from everything I’m hearing, that the family farm in particular is in crisis and it absolutely needs some government support. They’re seeing their driver’s insurance go way, way up. They’re seeing, of course, higher electricity prices now because the cap has been taken off by new Liberal government. If you start looking at all of the costs they have to face on top of their regular costs, and because of some of things I’ve mentioned, they really could be in very serious crisis.

I applaud the member for bringing this forward. I certainly will participate, and would be happy to, and hope that other members, particularly urban members, will take up the challenge.

Mr Yakabuski: I’m pleased to be able to speak on this motion today, returning to the farm for a day to learn some things. I certainly hope all of the urban members will take advantage of that. I myself am not a farmer and was not raised on a farm, but alluding to the presentation by the member from Perth-Middlesex, in the words of Jimmy Dickens, “I got my education out behind the barn.”

I had the opportunity to visit farms quite often, because many of my boyhood friends did come from farms. I got a little understanding of how hard they worked, not only their families but they themselves. After they would return from school, they would have chores to do, and before they’d go to school, they would have chores to do. So there’s certainly a great deal to be learned by spending some time with a farmer. I know farming has changed over the last 40 years or so since I would have been visiting those places as a young boy, but the workload is still very, very significant for people in those occupations.

It’s kind of ironic that we would be having a day to return to the farm. We have been speaking about going back to schools, and I have had the opportunity to visit many schools in my riding in the last few months. I have children in school as well, but it still has been a very worthwhile experience for me to see how the education system is working and how it’s relating to children of other families, not just my own. That has been positive for me, and I’m sure the visits to the farm will be positive as well. I intend to take advantage of that, as suggested by the member from Peterborough.

But I also remember, during my campaign, visiting sawmills—because a big issue in my riding is how the Ministry of the Environment is treating sawmills—and I made a commitment to a sawmill operator that I would spend a day working in his sawmill. Now, I have to

inform the House that I have yet to fulfill that commitment, but I fully intend to do that sometime this summer. I want to spend a day working in that sawmill and understanding the work they have to do, so it's easier for us to understand the trials and tribulations they face on daily basis and the frustration they sometimes feel when government regulations make it more difficult for them to do their job.

On the subject of farms, I certainly want to say that I will be supporting it and also taking advantage of the visit. My riding has a large farming component. It's the second-largest cattle-producing county in the province. With the exception of the towns of Renfrew, Arnprior and Deep River and the city of Pembroke, each of my municipalities has a farming component and they have had a difficult time of it, particularly last year with the finding of BSE in a cow. It has had a terrible impact on farmers not only in my riding but throughout the country. So we want to stand by our farmers and support them and make sure they understand that we do sense some of their pain and we're working to try to mitigate some of that. One way of understanding that better would certainly be if we got out to those places and lived how they live for a day.

Many of the farmers in my riding are not full-time farmers any more, because they can't make a living at farming. So they must work outside the home, have a full-time job and return to those beloved pieces of land that may have been in the family for generations and that they simply will not give up on, because farmers are a proud, hard-working group of people. Their day just never seems to end, because before they start their day's work and after they've completed their day's work outside the farm, they must see to it that all the necessary tasks that can't be completed during the daylight hours are completed after they return from work.

They're a group to be revered and respected because of the hard-working type of people they are. They're not a boisterous, loud, complaining type of people; they simply go along. They understand there are problems to be faced, and they face them and work hard every day, hoping that tomorrow will bring solutions to those problems. I certainly support the resolution and hope other members of my party will.

Mr Rinaldi: It's an honour for me to stand in this House today and support the back-to-the-farm day resolution of my colleague from Peterborough. I believe that we, as leaders in this province, need to be supportive of our farming industry, more so now than ever, and education is a very important component of that.

Let me elaborate a little on how important education about farming is in the beautiful rolling hills of Northumberland county. The local federation a few years back started a Rural Ramble farm tour, and I'd like to give a little detail about what this entails. It's all about education, about the future, about kids and about farming.

Each year, the agricultural community of Northumberland county invites urbanites to get out of town and come to farms to see what life in the country is all about. Rural

Ramble is a two-day driving tour of working farms and associated agri-businesses in the community. Today many children, going back at least a couple of generations, have no idea where products that nourish us every day come from. A lot of them probably think they come from the local Sobeys food counter.

As I said, Rural Ramble originated with the Northumberland Federation of Agriculture a few years back, and they thought that the first time around they might get 500 or 600 people visiting the farms of farmers who opened their doors voluntarily. Much to their surprise, they got over 2,000 people the very first year. These people came not only from our community and from Ontario but even from outside Ontario. In 2003, even through the hardships our farming communities suffered, they drew close to 4,000 people.

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This event appeals to families, to children. I know I've taken part every year at some level. It's interesting to see how grandparents bring their grandkids and parents bring their kids and interact with the actual life on the farm for the day. This year the Rural Ramble committee, which is made up of the Northumberland Federation of Agriculture, has scheduled the weekend of August 21 and 22.

These visits encompass a variety of farms and activities, such as dairy, beef, horse, crop, sheep, bison, trout farms, honeybee, maple syrup, apple and vegetable. There are also stops planned at retail markets, where they'll have quilts. They'll have woodlot demonstrations and machinery displays on some of these farms. Of course, there will be all sorts of educational displays to show how a crop goes from point A to point B.

There's a whole array of people who make this happen, all volunteers. They tell me that close to 1,000 volunteers participate to make this happen on those two days. Some of the profits are turned back to charity in those communities, so it's a win-win situation.

I urge members of this House to mark August 21 and 22 on their calendars to visit the beautiful rolling hills of Northumberland county, just east of Toronto. I'll leave you with a last thought before I share my time with my colleagues: that we remind ourselves each morning when we wake that we have to thank a farmer.

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): It is my pleasure to speak today in support of this resolution and to add my sincere appreciation to the member from Peterborough for his support of our agricultural community. I can say, coming from the most rural riding in the province of Ontario, and I might add—

Interjections.

Mrs Mitchell: I just want to set the record straight that my riding produces more agricultural product than many provinces within this wonderful country of Canada.

Ontario's farms, which number 57,000, are the first link in an agri-food chain. They generate billions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of jobs. They contribute to the health of every person in the province by producing safe, high-quality food.

The families who own these farms are committed stewards of the environment. They know that by caring

for their environment today, they will protect our resources: soil, water and air. They are making an investment in our future. These men and women are some of most productive and innovative people you will ever meet. That's because every day they rise to the challenges of the global marketplace, the demands of consumers and the whims of nature.

More than 200 different commodities are produced in Ontario. Our agricultural industry is the nation's most diverse. We export more than \$8 billion worth of agricultural and food products. Our industry accounts for fully one quarter of Canada's total agri-food exports.

We can learn a tremendous amount from Ontario's farmers. Any member of this House who makes time for an annual visit will benefit greatly from the first-hand experience of agriculture in Ontario. Coming from a rural riding, I can only stress how important it is to make the time for that visit. It can only help in our decision-making to have first-hand knowledge on the farm. I would remind the members of this House to conduct those visits with care and respect. The biosecurity measures that farmers have put in place to protect their livestock and livelihood must be respected.

I support this resolution and the minister supports this resolution. I urge every member in the House to do the same.

I will be sharing my time with a fellow rural member, from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I commend the member for Peterborough for coming up with this type of bill this morning.

In 2001, I put together a program, A Day on the Farm, for MPPs, and quite a few members of this assembly participated. The way it was organized, the member had to come in the day before and had to get up at 4:30 in the morning to learn about the farming community. The benefit we got out of this—I remember that the member for York West, Mario Sergio, went down to the Pierre Bercier farm, who was the president of l'Union des cultivateurs franco-ontariens. He went to a farm at Ste-Rose-de-Prescott. The Scarborough-Rouge River member, Alvin Curling, worked a full day on Tony Van Munsteren's farm in Cumberland. When CJOH (CTV) went down to look at how he was working, he came out saying, "In Toronto, we work from 9 to 5. When you get down on the farm, you have to work from 5 to 9, not 9 to 5." The member for Windsor West, Minister Sandra Pupatello, went down to work on a farm in Clarence, Muller farms. I went myself to the John Kirby farms in Chute-à-Blondeau. The Premier of today offered to send his children to work on a farm. The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound made an offer that he wanted to come down to Glengarry.

Let me tell you what those people learned: the importance of knowing how farmers work. They cannot afford to be sick for even one day. It is seven days a week that they have to be there, and it is from 5 to 9 at night and very often right up to midnight.

The benefit of this program that is going to be put together by the member for Peterborough—and I hope

that, like the back-to-school program we have for the members, a lot of our members will benefit from this day on the farm. You will see the difference when you meet in caucus. Every time Sandra Pupatello was asked what she learned on the farm, she said, "Before I went to work on a farm, I asked Jean-Marc, 'What do you want me to do over there? Everything is automatic now.'" I said, "Sandra, you will learn when you get there." She got there the night of 9/11 in 2001. The night of 9/11, she got to Orléans, Ontario, and I picked her up to take her down to the farm. The farmers explained to her what she had to do and what she could expect. I remember driving around at noon time and I saw Sandra on the farm, at the barn.

The Deputy Speaker: As long as the story isn't too long. Your time has expired.

Mr Lalonde: She came to me and said, "Jean-Marc, can I have a rest on your back seat?" I said, "Sandra, you told me you were going to work a full day. The full workday is from 5 to 9."

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Peterborough has two minutes to reply.

Mr Leal: I certainly appreciate the comments this morning, the insight from my colleagues: the members from Huron-Bruce, Perth-Middlesex, Northumberland, Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, and the fine riding of Toronto-Danforth.

One of the reasons that I think this is so important is that there's a very serious trade issue going on right now in Geneva. The World Trade Organization is having ongoing discussion in Geneva. One of the issues that will be part of those trade negotiations that directly impacts, or potentially has a significant impact on farming operations here in Ontario, is the whole question of supply management. One of the great opportunities of going back to the farm is for these MPPs who predominantly come from urban ridings to really get an understanding of what supply management is all about. Supply management in Ontario has been the principal foundation for many family farms.

1100

There's been great pressure over the last decade by the Americans and Europeans for Canada to abandon a supply management system. The supply management system has worked extremely well in providing reasonable prices and return for people in the farming community and guaranteeing to our consumers a reasonable price for products, particularly in the area of dairy, chickens, turkeys and eggs. When you think about it, when you go into Reid's milk store and pay \$4.39 for three bags of 1% milk, stand back for a moment and think what a bargain it really is when you compare to similar prices for the same product throughout the world. One of the reasons that I think MPPs must have a thorough understanding of what this is all about—collectively, supply management is a non-partisan issue—is so we can constantly inform our ag ministers in Ontario and in Ottawa that we need to keep this as part of the family farm operation.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): On a point of order, Speaker: As a farmer, I would like to extend an invitation to all members of this House to come and visit my farm. This would be a good time, as cows are now having their calves. So if you'd like to come, just let me know at your convenience. I'd love to have you there.

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order, but we'd sure like to go.

ROADSIDE MEMORIAL

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Ministry of Transportation should work with MADD Canada, where initiated by MADD, to enter into an agreement to allow the construction of a roadside sign, or other appropriate memorial on highway property, to commemorate an individual or individuals killed by a drunk driver.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): The member for York North has moved ballot item number 12. Pursuant to standing order 96, the member has 10 minutes.

Mrs Munro: I'd like to begin by first welcoming guests to the gallery here today. We are joined by constituents of mine, Alex and Rim Van Hemert from Newmarket. I certainly appreciate your being here. As well, we are joined by Carolyn Swinson, co-president of the Toronto chapter of MADD and former national vice-president. Welcome to the Legislature.

Every year in Canada, at least 1,200 people are killed in motor vehicle crashes caused by impaired driving. This represents about 40% of all deaths in car accidents. More than three people die every day in Canada, 365 days a year, because of the thoughtlessness of drunk drivers. This must stop. Over 70,000 people a year are injured because of impaired driving in Canada—almost 195 people every day. The estimated cost of drunk driving crashes is in the billions. We all know that drunk driving is a serious problem, and I am proud that our government in office took serious steps to fight drunk driving and reduce the carnage on our roads. Some of the important measures we took include establishing a 90-day administrative driver's licence suspension, increasing fines for driving while suspended, doubling dedicated funding for the RIDE program, putting in place mandatory remedial measures, lengthening the period of time for considering previous Criminal Code of Canada convictions, impounding the vehicles of those who drive while suspended for more Criminal Code convictions, increasing driver's licence suspension periods for repeat offenders, and introducing the interlock ignition program contained in a private member's bill from my colleague Garfield Dunlop.

I know all members of the House support these tough measures taken to fight drunk driving and I am certain they will continue.

Legal measures are important for stopping drunk driving, but the families and friends of victims and many

ordinary Ontarians want to do their part. MADD Canada is perhaps the single most important grassroots organization committed to stopping impaired driving and supporting the victims of the violent crime that is drunk driving. I am very proud to have worked with them in the past and look forward to working with them in the future, in the hope that one day drunk driving will only be a memory.

When I first thought of introducing a resolution on roadside memorials, I knew that MADD Canada would have to be involved. MADD has the respect of victims' families, the police, government and citizens, and any plan for memorials will only succeed with their support and wisdom. Roadside memorials are first and foremost for the victims of drunk drivers and MADD is their representative. I'm very proud that MADD Canada is supporting my resolution, and I commit to their members that if this resolution is passed by the House today, I will work diligently to ensure it comes into effect in Ontario.

Roadside memorials serve two important purposes. The first is indeed to provide the families and survivors of drunk-driving crashes the opportunity to honour a loved one who has died in a crash, allowing them to heal and remember someone they cared for, remembering a life and demonstrating to all who pass the spot that their loved one's life was important and was taken away for no good reason.

Memorials also act as a poignant reminder to passing drivers that too many lives are lost every year to drunk driving. Seeing a memorial with the name of an actual person killed by a drunk driver would be a far stronger symbol of the cost of drunk driving than any statistic or message we could give. Families of victims may be able to take some solace from knowing that their memorial to their son or daughter, brother or sister, father or mother, is not only a remembrance of that loved one, but is also a warning that may save a life. If only one life is saved by a memorial sign, then it is a success.

Several other provinces and states allow for memorials of various kinds. Saskatchewan and British Columbia have policies that allow for the construction of memorials. Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island have no formal policies, but informally permit memorials. Ontario's Ministry of Transportation has a guideline for memorial displays that permits displays and suggests sensitivity, but it specifically suggests that "....individuals should be sensitively advised of the potential for driver distraction and discouraged from installing any display. If the individual insists, the officer shall meet with the individual in the field and negotiate a short-term display without safety concerns."

I recognize that safety on the roads must remain MTO's first priority, and I commend that ministry for the news that our roads in 2002 were the safest in Canada. As a former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, I take some pride in this accomplishment. MTO, though, is not doing enough to permit memorials. They should be more than just tolerated; they should be promoted as a positive good. MADD Canada and MTO

working together to develop a common policy will ensure that memorials can be constructed, while ensuring that drivers and pedestrians alike are safe.

Our roads are bordered by signs of all kinds, including tourist signs in many rural areas. Roadside memorial signs could easily fit into our sign system. A memorial sign could use the language "Don't drink and drive, In memory of," a clear, consistent and simple message that, in my opinion, would be the best way for memorial signs to act as a warning to drivers.

1110

MADD Canada can work with MTO to develop a sensible policy, as has already been done in the province of Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia's Department of Transportation and Public Works and MADD Canada work together to provide for roadside memorials through the memorial white cross program. The Nova Scotia system provides for site location, installation, dedication ceremonies and visitation assistance. MADD Canada works with the ministry to create a fair and understandable system that is in place to provide for memorials, while ensuring that no memorial is a detriment to public safety on the roads. Their system recognizes that some locations are not appropriate for signs, but these locations are spelled out specifically in the guidelines. If Nova Scotia can set up a balanced system that works well, there is no reason that Ontario could not do the same. We should build on Nova Scotia's expertise to develop memorials in Ontario.

I have received many letters of support for this resolution, many of them from MADD chapters and the families of victims. I would just like to name a few of those that I have received: Lesley Read from MADD's chapter in Thunder Bay; Debbie White, founder of MADD Lanark county; Betty Kreidl, treasurer of MADD Hamilton; Betty and John Cochran from the North Bay chapter; Carolyn Swinson, already introduced to us as the co-president of the Toronto chapter; and Linda and John MacDonald from Goderich, Ontario, who sent me the names of 70 friends and family members who support this resolution.

Many of those who have contacted me have shared with me their personal stories of a loved one who was killed by a drunk driver. Their stories of loss are heart-wrenching, and I could spend this whole debate speaking of them. They are individuals, not numbers, not statistics, and we should honour their memories. I ask you to support this resolution, both to honour them and to act as a warning to drunk drivers that their actions kill, that cars crashed by drunk drivers are not accidents. Every one of us makes a choice, and we are all responsible to make choices that respect the lives of others.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): As always, I'm honoured to rise in this House to speak. Today, I've been asked to talk about this resolution. I think it's a great idea to talk about, especially after I went to the Internet and researched this topic. I went to the MADD Web site and I discovered the horrible story of the accidents caused by drivers who drink and drive. I went

to the research and found that 1,680 people are killed and 74,000 injured each year in alcohol-related crashes. That's from Health Canada, 1997.

I think it's very important to talk about this issue, especially because it costs lot of money and a lot of lives. Also, it's our duty as members of this House. We put ourselves in this position to defend the people of this province—and the people who drive in the province. I think it's a good idea to be discussed in this place, especially now that we have the president of the Toronto chapter with us. I think it's a very, very important idea.

I just have some questions. If we try to place memorial signs across the highway, I'm wondering about the safety and the importance of those signs. I think that to raise awareness and talk about it in the media, talk to the MTO and talk to the Minister of Transportation is always a good idea. It is always important to co-operate between MADD and the MTO, MADD's institutional associations with the Ministry of Transportation.

I'm a person who drives at least once or twice every week from London to Toronto to be in this place. It's very important to have safe drivers driving the highway along with me, because I want to protect myself and my family. I also care about being here, and I care about having safe roads. All the time on my way to this place I see memorial signs along the highway, both ways, from London to Toronto and from Toronto to London. When I'm driving, I cannot see those signs. They're not visible enough. The Ministry of Transportation also places signs along the highway from Toronto to Windsor, talking about drinking and driving and what drinking and driving causes, and trying to raise awareness among drivers not to drink and drive.

I wonder if those memorial signs will cause some kind of safety problem, because maybe the families of the people who got killed due to drinking and driving want to visit those spots and could perhaps create some kind of safety issue for other drivers.

I would recommend that all the chapters of MADD across the province work with the Ministry of Transportation on ads in the paper and ads on TV and work with the ministry to enhance the signs we have, if they wish. I also think it's a good idea, especially after I went on the Internet and found that the people who get killed due to driving and drinking are between 25 and 34 years of age—so I'm talking about a younger generation. We could launch a campaign, go to the malls, go to TV, go to the newspapers and try to talk to that segment of the population to create awareness.

I understand that this resolution is very important to everyone in this House and in this province in order to create awareness, because every one of us is subject to the danger caused by people who drink and drive.

Also, I learned that our Ministry of Transportation already has in place tough measures for people who drink and drive by losing their driver's licence and not being allowed to drive. The police in every city and every municipality in the province have checkpoints every Friday and Saturday night to check many drivers to see if

they are drinking and driving. I wonder if that measure will decrease the number of incidents or eliminate the death toll caused by drinking and driving.

In principle, I support the idea of the resolution. Hopefully, the member from York North will detail it more in order to make it effective and workable for all the people in this province.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm really pleased to join in the debate in support of my colleague and advocate with respect to ridding our roads of those who drink and drive, the member from York North.

Certainly I support her resolution, which reads, "In the opinion of this House, the Ministry of Transportation should work with MADD Canada, where initiated by MADD, to enter into an agreement to allow the construction of a roadside sign, or other appropriate memorial on highway property, to commemorate an individual or individuals killed by a drunk driver."

As I was driving down from Barrie today, on certain parts of the highway you see where people have been killed, families commemorating and recognizing where that accident happened, whether it's on a steel fence with flowers, or at the side of the highway with flowers and rocks and the significance of a grave. Let's face it, we have had more than our share of traffic accidents that have struck individuals needlessly on the highways with respect to drinking and driving.

1120

I can remember that when I first ran back in 1995, I was at the McDonald's in Bradford West Gwillimbury, which is on Highway 88, that runs right through Bradford and into Julia's riding in Newmarket. At the time we were in a provincial election. I was with the Premier-to-be, Harris. We met with a group from MADD Canada with respect to making sure and promising and keeping a commitment to MADD Canada with respect to bringing in drinking and driving legislation. In fact through the Attorney General, Charles Harnick, and the Minister of Transportation at that time, Al Palladini, we did bring in the toughest drinking and driving legislation in the country.

I think that was through the efforts of MADD Canada in terms of trying to deal with this problem. It is a problem that is not going to go away. No matter how hard we try, with human nature as it is, you take away licences and you take away other privileges and it still happens.

I would also like to think this resolution goes as far as to apply to accidents that occur off the GO Transit entrances. We don't have too many of them, but we've had a few. It should apply not only to highway property, but also to GO Transit entrances as we move through the GTA.

I know the member has done a lot of research on this. Certainly she has support for this resolution from third-party groups. I'm looking through the research she did on behalf of this legislation and I notice that the province of Nova Scotia has a white cross memorial program in a

partnership between the Department of Transportation and Public Works and MADD Canada. MADD has to go through the ministry for an approval process and to observe strict guidelines before they are permitted to place a cross. MADD is also responsible for soliciting permission from adjacent property owners. Locations for memorial crosses cannot pose a safety hazard and the placing of memorials on certain highways is prohibited.

The white cross memorial program in Nova Scotia is in conjunction with the Department of Transportation and MADD Canada. This is something the member is proposing. I think it brings some respect and process to those families who have had victims die from drunk drivers. As the member says in her letter to me, "Too many Ontarians die every year because of the thoughtlessness of those who drink and drive. Roadside memorials would allow families to honour their loved ones, and would also act as a warning to those who might be tempted to drink and drive that their actions can result in injury or death for other drivers, pedestrians and cyclists."

I think the symbolic message the member is putting forth, not only in terms of community education but also as a warning to people that their actions can affect other individuals, is something that has to be respected. I think it's very important. I understand from the member that MADD Canada supports roadside memorials, and there's a letter from the executive director showing that they support this with respect to the resolution that's before us today.

The member from York North, former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, did a lot of work with respect to making sure that the roads in my area, which is Bradford West Gwillimbury, and around her area too in Newmarket—you'd have Highway 88, the 400, Highway 9 all coming together in a very, very populated area.

I can tell you that it's no small issue, because we have had, on Canal Road—and the member would be familiar with that. As you drive, you can get to Canal Road off Highway 400, which is essentially a road that was designed for farmers in the area to access the 400 or move around the marsh areas. It goes right into Bradford West Gwillimbury. They have had many, many bad accidents. I can't cite the number of deaths that have happened over the years off Canal Road, because it's only a two-lane road. It's surrounded on one side by the marsh farms and on the other side by the canal. They have had too many tragedies.

I know that the council for Bradford West Gwillimbury has met and spoken with the Ministry of Transportation with respect to what to do with that road. The current position of the council, through a resolution, is to close off access from Highway 400 to Canal Road. That's a tough issue because of the growth that's going on with Bradford West Gwillimbury and the number of people that actually use that as a commuter road, though it was never designed for that. It's a winding road. It's for the marsh farmers, in terms of them getting to move around with their crops and their huge machinery.

That's an example, whether it was drinking and driving or just bad driving. But there have been more than enough tragedies in that area with respect to Canal Road. So it's something that's being looked at right now.

But certainly the member, with respect to dealing with this particular agreement, I think goes one step forward with respect to public education and a recognition. You can have the tough laws and ensure that they're enforced by the Ontario Provincial Police or your local police force, but you do need a public education program, if you want to call it that. But you have to also have some respect for those who have died. I think what is going on here is almost twofold: the public education to make sure drivers are aware of their conduct and what the consequences are, but also respect for the families who have lost someone needlessly through someone that has chosen to drink and drive, something that you just can't believe is still happening in this society.

I support this, and certainly I'll give up my time to the member from Halton.

Mr Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this motion. I want to personally congratulate the member from York North for bringing it forward.

My first involvement with drunk driving—it's something I've never forgotten; it's stuck with me through all my political years on city council and will through all the years I stay here at Queen's Park—was losing a close friend when I was 16 to a drunk driver on the 406 in St Catharines.

I've always been pleased to see all the different initiatives taken by MADD to bring forth the concerns about people on the road who are drinking and driving and to ensure that, first, the public is educated about the dangers of it and, more importantly, to take appropriate actions against those who have been caught drinking and driving.

I also wanted to share with the House that while I was on city council for 13 years, one of the committees that I made an overture to chair—and I was fortunate to do so—was the city's parking and traffic committee. Again, that goes back to the young friend of mine who was killed by a drunk driver. That committee dealt with making the roads safer in the city of Niagara Falls. During the six years that I was on that committee and worked with a good group of people from the public, there were a lot of things that we initiated to try to make our roads safer. I learned about the importance of stop signs and the warrants that are involved, stoplights. I learned about traffic calming, chicanes, speed humps, parking signs, all types of things that we initiated within our own community to try to make our roads safer for the residents who live there.

1130

I was also pleased, when I was doing my research on this, to see that the previous government—and I'll certainly give them congratulations for it—initiated some things to deal with drunk drivers. The 90-day driver's licence suspension, the mandatory back-on-track remedial measures program, which I'm familiar with—not

on a personal level, but I'm certainly familiar with it—the vehicle impoundment program and the ignition interlock are all very positive things, and I congratulate the previous government for initiating those.

For the 13 years I was on council, we would always have a presentation by Mothers Against Drunk Driving. In most cases it was done by a local high school, the one in particular that always came to city council to ask us to pass a resolution dealing with that matter, and also to provide the community and our own city employees the red ribbon to put on their vehicles, again to educate the public about the dangers of drinking and driving.

I can tell you some of the things that we changed even within city hall: If a community group wanted to use one of our facilities for some event, say our arena or our baseball diamond, and it involved the selling of alcohol, we made it mandatory that any of the groups that were using it had to have Smart Serve certification so that we could ensure that those people who were serving alcohol had some expertise in knowing who should or shouldn't receive it.

There's one other story I'm going to share, and again it's a passion that I believe in. I can remember four or five years ago a group of people came to me within the city of Niagara Falls who wanted to have a stoplight put up at an intersection. It didn't meet the warrants, so the regional traffic committee decided they wouldn't put it up. Sad to say, about four months later, after that situation occurred and it was turned down, we had a fatality at that intersection. In fact, it was someone I knew personally. I had been to their 30th anniversary and in fact had given them a plaque from the city of Niagara Falls congratulating them. The lady was killed at that intersection.

The point I'm making is, again you realize that you'd rather put up appropriate things, such as what's being suggested, because they're positive things. I have seen the signs down in the States. I think it can be done. It can fit within MTO. I know there are some regulations we have in place. Working together, I think we can come up with a solution and we could put those types of things up.

The final comment I'm going to make is another personal comment. We had a death about a year ago in Niagara Falls—a young boy was killed. I'm not going to say it was related to drunk driving but, to this day, as you make the curve on Stanley Avenue or Thorold Stone Road, there is still a memorial of flowers sitting on the fence. I pass that every day on my way to work. I always look at it and think of that situation.

The resolution that's being put forward is a good resolution. I think it's something that can be worked with the ministry. I'm going to tell the House that it's one I am going to support because it's one that I personally believe in. I congratulate the member from York North for bringing that forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I rise in support of this resolution from Julia Munro, the

member for York North. As we know, it's a resolution to allow roadside memorials for drunk driving victims.

I wish to cut to the chase. I ask everyone present to pass this resolution before we walk out through those doors this morning. Just think of the message that we would send across the Ontario. I say across Ontario—we have been doing this program down in Norfolk county since 1993. I can't tell you how many white crosses we've pounded into the ground—dozens and dozens—and I sure couldn't tell you how many young people are dead in our area because of drunk driving. I represent a rural area, and this has been a long, ongoing problem in my area, the drinking-driving rate. It's about three times the provincial average.

The member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford made mention of the white cross program in Nova Scotia. Again, there's another example of a pilot project that I understand, as in Norfolk county, is working well. It is getting people's attention. I have had the good fortune, before being elected, to work for the Ontario Addiction Research Foundation for 20 years and I can tell you that in situations like this, prevention and raising awareness with a memorial program like this is a lot easier than having to deal with the aftermath.

I think of one program we worked on and we implemented: the RIDE program. At that time, RIDE stood for Reduce Impaired Driving in Etobicoke, a pilot project. A year later it became Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere. I would like to see a similar track with this particular initiative, partly to commemorate, but more to raise awareness. It's hard to gather evidence on whether an awareness or prevention program like this works. Then, again, we don't keep track of the crosses down in Norfolk. We know they're there. We know that people do see them, perhaps unconsciously, and we like to think that they act accordingly.

As I mentioned, our area has an impaired driving rate three times the provincial average. Oftentimes, we're second only to areas like Manitoulin in having the worst drinking-driving incidence in the province, and in the early 1980s so many people were not only sick and tired of the danger on the roads and the worry about drinking and driving, the worry about young people, but many people, including my family, stopped going out on the roads. I would not take my family out on a Friday or Saturday night, certainly after 10 or 11 o'clock, when people were coming out of the hotels. I knew the statistics. The average person was purposely not going out on the roads because of what was coming the other way.

For that reason, we had an initiative. We set up a group called Citizens Against Drinking and Driving. I put an ad in the paper, and the first person to call me was a woman named Shirley George, and much of the white cross initiative came from Bruce and Shirley George from Delhi. Sadly, the Georges were personally touched by the hazardous impact of drunk driving, and I wish to quote from a letter that I received yesterday from Mrs George: "My interest is not academic, but personal, as we lost a daughter and two parents to an impaired driver who

killed five others in the same accident. That driver had a blood-alcohol level of 0.26%."

I have attended many, many high school presentations with Mrs George. She tells her story. I think of a presentation she did in the assembly of Delhi High School, describing the story of eight people killed that evening. It was Christmas Eve. As we know, she lost her daughter and both her parents. I've never seen anything like this in a group of high school kids. The gym was full, she finished her presentation, and a guy over in the back stood up and started clapping, another guy over here, and one by one the whole audience stood up and gave her a standing ovation, not orchestrated.

1140

Again, I'm speaking partly on behalf of the George family and because of that tragedy Christmas Eve. If we have the will, perhaps we will see a major initiative in place by next Christmas. There's the traditional time for us to think ahead, if we can do some positive stuff on this.

Mrs George got the idea for roadside crosses in Montana. I've seen them in Spain. She wrote a letter to the Attorney General's office and asked for a plan to ensure that lives lost were not forgotten, again just asking for a reminder. Unfortunately, Mrs George was told that the AG's office was not in favour of this. Partly, I think it's because we used white crosses. The AG's office indicated it would offend the sensibilities of non-Christians, so the government was not interested at that time. I can see in part that argument, although I point out the flag of Ontario has more than one cross on it, certainly the cross of St George.

I do mention that MTO has guidelines with respect to roadside memorials. However, those guidelines discourage individuals from erecting memorials, based largely on safety reasons. I'd like to think that much of our initiative here would be for those reasons. After Mrs George's being turned down by the Attorney General's office, they travelled in Japan and saw crosses there. This is a country that I would suspect is, by and large, more Buddhist than Christian.

She brought her proposal to our group, Citizens Against Drinking and Driving. We immediately embraced the proposal. We made some arrangements with a local welding shop, and on the May 24 weekend in 1993, with the former mayor of the town of Delhi we erected two crosses. We've put up dozens of crosses since then.

Very simply, we make arrangements with the police. We make a point of putting them on private land because we're not allowed to put them on the side of the road. As we erect these crosses, just to avoid any hassles with government, we first have to see police reports to determine that the death truly was alcohol-related. Then we very simply seek permission from the landowner to erect the cross.

We've been doing this for 10 years. It is doable. Consider that a pilot project. I would hope we could move forward with this.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I'm sure this is going to be unanimous in this House. I know that

all members of the New Democratic Party who will be here at the time of the vote, and I'm not sure how many that will be, will be supporting this motion. We thank the member from York North for bringing this forward. All of us in this House either have been involved or know of people who have lost loved ones due to drunk drivers.

It struck my own extended family many years ago when a young second cousin, a lad of only 18 years old, was killed by a drunk driver. I still remember the sadness in our extended family of losing someone so young, someone who had just started university, someone who had his whole life in front of him.

Members of Legislature will remember the sadness when Bob Rae's mother-in-law and father-in-law were killed during his time as a member in this Legislature, again by a drunk driver. It has touched all of us. We ought not ever to forget that it could happen to any one of us, on any day that we're crossing the street, on any day that we're in our car, that someone who is impaired could run into us.

I've heard stories today about other provinces and other countries. I have to tell you that if you travel extensively, you will see that literally almost every country in the world has memorials at the side of the road to those who have died, not necessarily from drunk drivers but from a lot of traffic accidents. You will see them throughout Europe; you will see them in Spain, France, Italy and you will particularly see them in Greece, if you ever have a chance to visit that storied land, particularly on some of the winding mountain roads. You will see memorials throughout the country to people who have died on the roads, either by drunk drivers or occasionally by other accidents. You will see in South America, through most of the countries, little roadside memorials to those who have died.

Certainly the idea, although new to Canada, is an old, old idea and one that I think we should emulate and follow. We need to remind drivers over and over again of the pitfalls of drunk driving. To see a roadside memorial is to remind them constantly of the error, the huge consequences of drinking and driving.

MADD Canada has done a tremendous job over the years. You see little red ribbons on many, many aerals on cars around this province. But we need to do more, because a red ribbon is a symbol on the car itself that you should not drink and drive. People need to see the consequences on the sides of the roads.

I've looked at the proposed bill and it has much merit. I do have some questions, and they're made by friendly—I know this is going to pass, so when it goes to committee and is further debated, there are a number of aspects that need to be dealt with. The bill itself talks about either signs or roadside memorials. I would ask that the member push for memorials. There are enough signs, of course, on our highways, our roads. They often become quite confusing to drivers. You can see literally dozens of signs within a space of a couple of hundred metres, and to have another sign, usually in congested areas, I think will add more confusion. To have a memor-

ial that is separate and apart and is not confused with a sign will further enhance safety. It will also, to my mind, be far more poignant. So I would ask, when this comes to committee, that the memorial be the aspect that we put forward—the memorial to those who have lost their lives, but also the memorial to remind those who might drink and drive that they ought not to do so.

I've heard what the member and other speakers had to say about placement. That was not contained within the bill. But I think emulating and following what is done in Nova Scotia is a good start. The memorials should be placed in areas and locations that are agreed to by the Ministry of Transportation and that will not cause any problems with sightlines and may not in fact end up causing an accident themselves. Certainly that would be the last thing we would want to do.

There is a further question which I know cannot be contained in a private member's bill because only the government can do it, and that is the costs. This obviously is going to cost money. It's going to cost the government money; it's going to cost MADD Canada money; it's going to cost the bereaved families money. It's going to cost somebody, somewhere, somehow money. There cannot be a provision in a private member's bill because only the government can bring forward a bill that has costs involved if the government is going to actually pay. When I look at the resources of MADD Canada, they are not great. MADD Canada operates on a shoestring; I think that's a fair comment.

I cannot help but be saddened by what I saw in the Toronto Star just a couple of days ago. It was a letter. If one does have the occasional beer and goes into the Beer Store, they will see that there's a little box with a red ribbon on it from MADD Canada. At least you used to see that, because on March 31 those were all taken out of the Beer Stores. From 1991 to 2004, MADD Canada received, on average, between \$25,000 and \$40,000 a year in donations from people who bought beer and put their change in the little box. On March 31, all that stopped.

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The Toronto Star article says, and I'm only going to quote one or two paragraphs from it, "According to the Beer Store, the outlets dropped MADD as a sponsor and are now limiting their social policy donations to just one group, the Ontario Community Council on Impaired Driving. The Beer Store claims the move was not about politics, but about corporate efficiency."

It goes on to say in the next paragraph:

"'We were very open with MADD that we were looking at streamlining our charities,' Taylor said. She said the release was the first official response from MADD following a conversation informing the charity of the store's decision March 31."

Finally, in the last paragraph, there's a quote from MADD:

"'What does she expect us to do?' Murie responded. 'They're hiding under a smokescreen to hide from being the bad guys that they are.'"

I suggest that if MADD is involved and if MADD is expected to pay, or if MADD is expected to contribute or to assist the families in contributing, they need to have the revenues to do it. If we are intent upon this bill, then we have to equally, as a government and as a Legislature, tell the Beer Store that they have to put the box back. The Beer Store has, I would suggest, an obligation. It's called externalities, a rather strange word, that you have to pay for the problems you create. They put boxes in beer stores and liquor stores and other locations so that people who imbibe will know that there are consequences of their imbibing and they will have a responsibility to pay something toward it. I suggest that needs to be done.

MADD has done a terrific job over the years. Its primary job has been, not the roadside memorials, as good an idea as this is, but in imposing the idea upon various governments at all levels of the need to make this the criminal offence it is, that increasing sentences is the way to go. MADD has done a terrific job in showing that our court systems, our Legislatures and everyone involved cannot any longer take this to be a minor offence. It needs to be considered a serious offence and the penalties must flow from that.

I commend the member from York North for her bill. We will be supporting it. Please make it as strong as you can in the end.

Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I'm pleased today—or not pleased—to speak on this issue that was raised by the member from York North. It's a sad issue that we have here to talk about in private members' legislation.

I wanted to remind us of the resolution we're talking about. It's to work with MADD Canada and/or its individual chapters, where initiated, "to enter into an agreement to allow the construction of a roadside sign, or other appropriate memorial on highway property, to commemorate an individual or individuals killed by a drunk driver."

When I read this resolution, it reminded me of some of the debate and the difficulty I had as a municipal councillor when we had the loss of life on municipal rights of way, how we struggled with the commemorative flowers and plaques that people wanted to put on their roadway and how difficult a time we had dealing with family members who wanted to honour members who had been taken from them tragically.

Although today we are focusing on the good work that MADD Canada does—and they do do good work, unsung heroes' work, and I support the work they do; in fact, I have a red ribbon on my antenna out in my driveway—my experience is that we have difficulty differentiating the work MADD does from the deaths that occur from so many other causes. I support the idea in principle of commemorating those losses, but again we have no idea, most of the time, how those losses occurred.

In my case, I had the unfortunate opportunity to attend a funeral last summer, during the blackout, actually. I came back from Nova Scotia to attend a funeral for a

young man who lost his life in a tragic accident. He was 16 years old. I don't wish that on anybody: to go to a funeral, to watch all the young people, all his friends, attend a funeral for a 16-year-old. And it had nothing to do with drinking and driving. It was an inexperienced driver; it was youthful exuberance that caused the accident.

There are so many accidents on our roadways that are due to inattention, inexperience, driver error and weather conditions. If we are to commemorate all those losses on our roadways, untimely as they are, we have to ensure that the commemorative placement of flowers or plaques is done in a safe way and that we work with the Ministry of Transportation on whatever we place on roadways to commemorate that loss of life. I believe that not only do we not need a formal agreement but also that the ministry is flexible enough to work within the existing process to allow MADD or any other group to commemorate a special person who is lost in an untimely way.

In the case of Brampton, we tried to work with our works and transportation department to deal with each issue on a case-by-case basis, because I think every accident brings a different kind of issue with it. It's not always drinking and driving. Sometimes it's an accident that's related, as I said, to youthful exuberance, driver inattention or weather conditions—they all play a part. Although today we're dealing with provincial roadways, I think municipalities look to us for guidance and direction; they are also struggling with this issue. It comes up on an annual basis, and in Brampton we finally put together a motion to this effect.

Today we heard from a number of very thoughtful speakers who tried to bring a different aspect to this private member's legislation. We all support the idea, the intention, and we want to support the good work that MADD does. In this House we have to know that the ideas we bring have to cover all the different groups that would want the ability to work with our Ministry of Transportation and our roadways to ensure they are safe. It's important to commemorate an individual or individuals killed by a drunk driver, but we also need to examine the fact that we lose lots of individuals on our roadways for reasons other than drinking and driving.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for York North has two minutes to reply.

Mrs Munro: Thank you to all the members who have taken the time today to speak on this resolution. I really appreciate the support and the comments that have been made. In the few moments I have, I'd like to respond to a couple of issues that have been raised.

One of the most important things in the resolution, from my perspective, in regard some of the concern over details that members have raised, has been that it says "to enter into an agreement," and that is my purpose. I made that wording very clear to allow people to work on some of the intricacies and difficulties and things like that.

Obviously the details—whether it's a memorial or a sign, or the distribution of costs—are negotiated issues. I think it's important to recognize that, as legislators, we

have a responsibility to set policy. It is then through our appropriate ministry that we look to provide the details of making that policy work. I appreciate the many comments that have been made with regard to some of the complexities that are inherent in a decision like this.

Our commitment to this resolution is political will. If we pass this resolution today, we will demonstrate the political will to move forward in recognizing the importance not only of an individual loss but of a social message. The member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant recognized that it's always difficult to measure a social message, but that's one we have to work on.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for private members' public business has expired.

ONTARIO FARMS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We will deal first with ballot item number 11, standing in the name of Mr Leal.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?
Carried.

ROADSIDE MEMORIAL

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We will now deal with ballot item number 12, standing in the name of Mrs Munro.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?
All those in favour, say "aye."
All those opposed, say "nay."
In my opinion, the ayes have it.
Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.
The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.

The Deputy Speaker: Mrs Munro has moved ballot item number 12.

All those in favour will please rise.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Brown, Mike
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Colle, Mike
Craitor, Kim
Delaney, Bob
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Dunlop, Garfield
Flaherty, Jim
Gerretsen, John
Hardeman, Ernie

Hoy, Pat
Hudak, Tim
Jeffrey, Linda
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Milloy, John
Mossop, Jennifer
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill

Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Prue, Michael
Pupatello, Sandra
Racco, Mario
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Smitherman, George
Tascona, Joseph N.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen
Yakabuski, John

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please rise.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 44; the nays are zero.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

This House will stand adjourned until 1:30 pm of the clock.

The House recessed from 1209 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EDUCATION ROUND TABLES

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): I'm pleased to announce to this House that in my role as education critic for the official opposition, I will be hosting the first of my party's education round-table consultations, Partnerships for Parents and Students, this Saturday, April 17, here at Queen's Park.

Six weeks ago, the Minister of Education held what he called an education partnership table. When I first heard of this event, I thought it was a very good idea. However, I was disappointed to learn that the Minister of Education had excluded the voices of many parents and students in our province. In fact, some groups were specifically told they were not welcome to participate in his so-called partnership.

This strikes me as typical of what we have seen from this government: a cynical, arrogant approach to governing. This Liberal government makes promises they know they cannot keep and thinks they do not need to answer legitimate questions. Now we see they won't even listen to the hard-working Ontarians who put them in office. This is unacceptable.

To help remedy this problem, I am issuing an open invitation to all the people of Ontario who are interested in education to join me in my partnerships for parents and students. These round tables will be inclusive and thorough, and we will even listen to those with whom we may well disagree.

We welcome all to our Queen's Park consultations, and any who wish to have input but can't get to Queen's Park may do so through my Web site, www.jimflaherty.com.

MICHAEL CAHILL

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to highlight the activities of an impressive youth in my riding of Niagara Falls. Michael Cahill will graduate from high school this June with over 1,600 accumulated volunteer hours. It is particularly impressive for a young teen to devote so much time to our community, and I commend him for his dedication.

Next week, we'll celebrate Volunteer Week in the province of Ontario. I believe Michael Cahill is a wonderful example of the spirit of volunteerism that makes Ontario such a great place. Michael has been involved in a number of theatrical productions at both his school, St Michael High School, and in several theatrical companies that Niagara Falls is known for. Not only has Michael played acting roles in a number of productions in Niagara, but he has also given of his time and effort in Niagara Falls by participating in the Niagara Falls Santa Claus parade and the Casino Niagara marathon.

I want to tell you that Ontario is a great place to live in, and volunteering makes it stronger. I urge all mem-

bers of this House to take advantage of Volunteer Week next week to recognize all those who give of their time to serve all our communities to make them better places for all of us to live in.

HOME CONSTRUCTION

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I rise to bring to the attention of the Liberal government once again an important issue affecting a number of my constituents in the township of Essa.

Donna Rushton, Patti Hazlett and Jane Stewart have lived on Parkside Drive in the community of Angus for just under five years. Ever since they moved into their houses, they've watched them deteriorate to the point where they no longer feel safe in their own homes. In fact, the homes are sinking into the ground and shifting off their foundations. The walls are cracking and the homes are almost impossible to heat. This extensive damage has been caused by poor workmanship when the homes were built, and my constituents have had a very difficult time getting the Ontario new home warranty program to resolve this situation in a speedy and satisfactory manner.

Mrs Hazlett and I have both written to the government previously on this issue, and I'm asking again today for the help of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. I ask that the ministers pick up the phone today and call my constituents, who can provide you once again with their information, a CD with photos of the houses and comments from the township of Essa, which has been monitoring this situation. Really, we need your help. Please do your jobs. Do the right thing and help these people with their homes that are falling apart through no fault of their own, but because of shoddy workmanship in the village of Angus. The developers should be gone after. We've tried to do that, but we need the power of government to come to some satisfactory answer here.

DAN OFFORD

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): Today I'd like to pay tribute to a great man, Dr David (Dan) Offord, who passed away last Saturday in Ottawa.

Dr Offord loved children and devoted his life and career to helping disadvantaged and at-risk kids. Dr Offord was one of Canada's most distinguished child psychiatrists, a world leader in increasing understanding of children's mental health and a pioneer of evidence-based psychiatry.

During his illustrious career, Dr Offord was head of the division of child psychiatry at McMaster University and research director of the Chedoke Child and Family Centre. At McMaster he started research in child epidemiology, an area in which both McMaster and Dr Offord are now internationally respected.

The Ontario Child Health Study, which he led, is today widely recognized as the most important population-based study of children's mental health in the world during the last 30 years. This study has helped with social policy development here in Canada and across the world.

Dr Offord is known nationally and internationally as the founding director of the Offord Centre for Child Studies. The centre is dedicated to improving the life quality and life opportunities of children through research, policy development and training. The centre is a lasting legacy of his valuable work.

Every summer for the last 40 years, Dr Dan, as he was affectionately called by those of us who had the privilege of knowing him, served as the director of the Christie Lake Camp in Ottawa, offering programs for disadvantaged and troubled youth.

In 2001, Dr Offord was inducted as a member of the Order of Canada. In accepting Canada's highest honour, Dr Offord expressed his hope that Canadians from coast to coast would do their part to improve the quality and life chances of children, stating, "It is our collective responsibility to ensure bright futures for today's children so that tomorrow's society will benefit."

The professional community has lost a giant, a mentor to many of us health professionals. Our children have lost a champion and friend. Today we give thanks for his life and offer our sincere condolences to his family and his professional colleagues.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Complaints around property assessment have climbed to the top 10 of issues that occupy our staff in our constituency offices and, I'm confident, of the constituency office of every one of the 102-plus members of this Legislative Assembly.

Look, the Tories privatized and created the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. It has been a fiasco. Run like a for-profit operation, it slashed jobs from 2,100 down to 1,300. That's at least a 40% cut in the number of people working there. We've seen an explosion of \$100,000-plus jobs, inevitably among the brass and the people who are exploiting the profits of this so-called not-for-profit corporation.

The profit motive rules. The information technology consultants are making out like bandits. I'm told by insiders from MPAC, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp, that there is a computer scandal brewing that is going to, in and of itself, explode, leaving an incredible mess behind.

Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals promised—they promised so many things, they promised anything they had to to get elected, during the course of the election campaign—to rebuild public services. Well, I say it's time for McGuinty and the Liberals to keep at least one promise and restore property assessment back to the public sector, restore it back to public ownership and public control, restore it back to a true non-profit oper-

ation so that professional and qualified civil servants, workers in the public sector, can serve homeowners, can serve municipalities, can serve this province, rather than the interests of private and corporate profit.

1340

YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): In the last provincial election, less than 25% of young people between the ages of 18 to 24 turned out to vote. Investing in our province's future is important, not only in health and education, but also in the democratic process. By engaging young people today, we are preparing for the future and, most important, we're taking advantage of a great opportunity to access an untapped source of knowledge. Today, I want to share with this House what I am doing to learn from and to speak to the young people in our province and in my riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

Most recently, I was thrilled to launch the Lakeshore Scholars Program in Etobicoke-Lakeshore, which will see young people in local area high schools participate directly in local issues and learn through experience about the political process by working directly with me on issues that matter most to them. I have also hosted pre-budget town halls with students in grades 9, 10 and 12. Their contributions to the process were not only extremely helpful, but definitely offered a unique and important perspective on the fiscal situation our province faces. It's so important for all of us to become involved in engaging young people in the political process.

Next Wednesday, I will continue to work toward this goal by addressing young women at the Women in Politics and Government Career Learning Day for young women in high school.

I encourage all members to work toward making a direct impact on the lives of young people, and share with them the values and goals that make public service so rewarding and important.

TAXATION

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "I will not raise your taxes." Do you know who said that? It was Dalton McGuinty. It wasn't Greg Sorbara; it was Dalton McGuinty, and he said that to the province, and I think some people think that was another broken Liberal promise. Just think, ladies and gentlemen, now the Minister of Finance is saying that the "I will not raise your taxes" statement only applied to personal income taxes.

Apparently, Mr Sorbara and Mr McGuinty have forgotten two very important facts: While in opposition, Team McGuinty opposed every tax cut made by the Harris-Eves government. The Taxpayer Protection Act signing by Dalton McGuinty during the election campaign became a shameful ploy, filled with deceit and now another broken promise.

What have we seen recently? We've seen the possible reintroduction of the NDP tax grab—photo radar. We've

seen the political spin by the trial balloon soup-and-salad tax. We've seen the assault on small businesses with the lifting of the municipal property tax cap rate.

But I want to read something, Mr Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

Mr Dunlop: We'll do that a little later on.

WILDFIRE PREVENTION WEEK

Mr Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I rise today to inform the members of the Legislature that next week, the week of April 18 to 24, is being declared Wildfire Prevention Week.

This is the first time that the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ontario fire marshal's office have made such a declaration. It is only fitting that it should take place this year, as 2004 marks the 60th anniversary of Smokey the Bear's efforts to promote fire prevention.

The fire marshal and MNR have asked fire departments across the province to urge communities that could be affected by wildfire to be "FireSmart." A fire safety package—with the theme of FireSmart—is being sent to Ontario's fire departments. It has been prepared in consultation with the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs and professional educators. The province's fire departments will be sharing messages that focus on safeguarding homes, cottages and other structures that are adjacent to potentially dangerous, combustible wildland vegetation.

Wildfires in British Columbia and across the United States in recent years have highlighted the serious impacts of wildfire, the tremendous threat to life and property that can occur.

Our goal is to make communities safer by highlighting the many ways that people can prevent wildfires and safeguard their homes and families. During this week, and throughout the summer, Ontario's fire services will be trying to reach all members of their communities with a fire prevention message. People of all ages, from primary schoolchildren to adults, can help make a difference.

People who are interested in getting involved in Wildfire Prevention Week or who want copies of the fire safety educational materials can contact their local fire department, the office of the fire marshal or the Ministry of Natural Resources.

TAXATION

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): From 1985 to 1990, Ontario paid the price for electing a Liberal government. During that period, the Peterson Liberals increased taxes 33 times and almost doubled government spending.

Fast forward to 2004, and as Yogi Berra would say, "It looks like déjà vu all over again." We've witnessed the McGuinty Liberals rescinding tax relief measures, including one for seniors, and go on a \$3-billion spending binge, all in less than six months. Now they're planning to strike again, with a soup, salad and sandwich tax that hits Ontarians who can least afford it.

In my riding of Leeds-Grenville, this tax grab will hurt far and wide. In Brockville, it will hit the coffee club at King's, the seniors at Burger King and the folks grabbing toast and coffee at Jon's or George's restaurants at Tincap. It will also penalize seniors having a coffee at Lockett's Tim Hortons in Prescott, the Maple Leaf in Gananoque or the Rapid Valley at Lansdowne.

This fat-cat Liberal tax will only serve to feed the insatiable spending appetite of the Ontario Liberals. It must be stopped, and the Ontario Conservative Party will do everything possible to make that happen.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): In the east members' gallery, former member Doug Reycraft, from the 33rd and 34th Parliaments, is here from Middlesex. Will we all welcome him here, please?

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated April 14, 2004, of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Premier, who has yet to shut down the soup-and-sandwich tax trial balloon.

When Mrs Smith, who lives in Ottawa South and works at the hospital, buys her lunch at the local cafeteria in that hospital the day before your next budget, that price will be at one level; the day after your budget, in which you bring in this proposed soup-and-sandwich tax, she's going to pay more.

Here's the problem: You promised not to increase personal income taxes, but you also promised not to increase any other taxes. I'd like to know, Premier, how you will explain to your constituent why, the day after your budget and the day after this tax on a soup-and-sandwich meal, she has to pay more. If it's not as a result of your tax, what is it?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I want to thank the member for his representation made on behalf of my constituent. I can say this: that never have so many strange bedfellows

come to the assistance of Ontario's vulnerable. We have the restaurateurs and multinational corporations, who have the most vulnerable at heart, I'm sure, when they make their representations in connection with this issue; and we have the Conservatives, of course, who have risen to become our new champions of the dispossessed and the vulnerable in the province of Ontario.

I am pleased to hear from my constituent through the member opposite, and we will take that advice, and so much more advice, when it comes to the preparation of our budget.

Mr Klees: I'm sure Mrs Smith, your constituent, listened to that response and is probably amongst the 75% of the people in this province who have lost confidence in you, sir, for that kind of response, because it's arrogant. It's arrogant because you're not addressing the issue that we're dealing with.

Yesterday your finance minister emerged from under his cloud to argue that an affordable meals tax wouldn't be a tax increase at all, but rather just the cancellation of a tax exemption. And after he unwound himself out of this pretzel that he wound himself into, the rest of us were left wondering, what does a Liberal define today as a tax increase? I'm going to ask the Premier one more time: After Mrs Smith pays more for her meal the day after this budget imposes that tax, how will you explain why that meal cost more the day after the budget than it did the day before?

1350

Hon Mr McGuinty: I'm sure that the member opposite would want to provide the truth and reassurance to Mrs Smith that no decisions have been made with respect to this particular issue. I can say that, given the considerable deficit that we have been left as a result of the mismanagement on the part of my Conservative colleagues, we'll be bringing a balanced approach to the management of the government's finances. We will be looking for new ways to generate revenues; I want to make that perfectly clear. We will also be finding some savings, which should have been found a long time ago. We will no longer be spending money on partisan political advertising projects. I was informed the other day that on another matter, as a result of hiring 100 consultants on a full-time basis in the government, in the public service, we are now going to save \$5 million every year. Those are just some examples of the steps we are taking to save Ontarians money.

Mr Klees: To the Premier: If he is going to save all of this money, then why would he tax the most vulnerable in our province? Why would he go out of his way to put taxes on seniors and on students who eat in their cafeteria? If he's doing all of that, why can he not stand up in his place today and say, "Yes, you know what? The trial balloon was wrong. My finance minister was wrong for even letting it fly. I'm going to stand up now in my place and I'm going to say, 'Yes, on the one hand I agree it would be a tax increase, and it won't happen.'" We're going to need a dictionary to figure out what these Liberals mean by the various terminologies they're bringing forward in this House.

Will you stand in your place today and will you commit, after all of those savings that you've just told us you found and will continue to find, that you will not implement this regressive tax on the people of Ontario?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Let me say this unequivocally and with as much possible assurance and reassurance that I can provide to Mrs Smith and others who may be as concerned as she is: Our very first budget will provide greater assistance to the dispossessed and the vulnerable in one budget alone than this government brought in eight and a half years. I guarantee that.

You can look at our track record thus far: We have increased the minimum wage; we have put into place a rent bank; we are back into the business of affordable housing; we put in place a tuition freeze for two years; and we have only just begun when it comes to ensuring that our most vulnerable have every opportunity they need in this province to succeed.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question?

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): My question is for Premier McGuinty—not the real Premier, the Minister of Finance. We have an important question here and it's about integrity. He made a very solemn promise to the people of Ontario, the taxpayer protection promise, which he signed and which said, "I, Dalton McGuinty" will "not raise taxes or implement any new taxes without the explicit consent of Ontario voters." That was unqualified. And then yesterday we had the putative Premier, the Minister of Finance, saying, "We said during the campaign that we're not going to raise personal income taxes, and we will keep our word on that."

My question to you is a request that you stand in your place now and come clean with the people of Ontario on what you're going to keep your word on. Is it on no tax increases or is it, as the real Premier says, only personal income taxes?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I can assure the member opposite that we will not do as his party did previous to the last election, when he provided every reassurance to Ontario voters that they had a balanced budget. We discovered, as you well know—this is now part of history and folklore in Ontario. The former Provincial Auditor, Erik Peters, took a very close look at the books, a long and solemn look at the books, and discovered a \$5.6-billion deficit, in addition to another \$2.2 billion in very real risks. That is the true story when it comes to a broken commitment in the province of Ontario.

Mr Flaherty: I'm sure the people of Ontario will take that as another, perhaps the most fundamental, example of a basic promise broken by this government. And it gets worse. Now there are the games with language. We read in the paper this morning that the Grits are saying things about this soup-and-salad tax, that it's not a tax increase; it's a loophole that they're going to close. This is an attempt to avoid responsibility. Even the Toronto Star figured it out. Even the Toronto Star said—

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Not the Globe?

Mr Flaherty: No, no, this is the Toronto Star today. It says, "This is a tax increase, pure and simple. Its purpose

is to raise an estimated \$200 million in new revenues." Premier, will you agree that your proposed tax on soup and salad is a tax increase and the purpose is a cash grab from the poor people of Ontario?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Well, I guess there's nothing—this is a little bit beyond the pale to have the member opposite rising to the defence as well, joining the legions of Conservatives around the province who are rising to the defence of the most vulnerable.

I know there's tremendous interest in this budget, and we face some significant challenges. There's no doubt about that whatsoever. We've got a massive deficit, which we've got to climb out of together. At the same time, we've got to be able to find ways to invest in better health care and in better education. We've got to enlist people in the cause of helping us to conserve energy, for example. Those are all important objectives, which we intend to meet through our budget.

Mr Flaherty: The people of Ontario know that, as the Carter commission on taxation said many years ago, "a buck is a buck is a buck." They also know that a tax is a tax is a tax, and that "RST" stands for "retail sales tax." It's not a loophole; it's not an exemption. It's a tax increase that you intend to impose on the people of Ontario. In fact, the retail sales tax is the second-largest source of revenue for the province. I urge you, Premier, and I ask you, whether you'd make sure—because I know you think you're doing the right thing—that MPP Toby Barrett's petition against this soup-and-salad tax is distributed in every coffee shop in your riding. Will you do that for us, Premier?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I've been reduced to a quivering mass. I don't know what to say.

Again, we intend to bring a balanced approach to our management of government finances. We intend to put forward a plan that will see us live up to our objectives of providing the people of Ontario better health care and better education. We intend to ensure that we have a plan in place that will get us out of this deficit hole dug by the previous government. We do not intend to gut public services, and we do intend to come to the assistance of our most vulnerable.

1400

HYDRO RATES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Last year about this time, you were very critical of the Conservatives for announcing their budget at the Magna auto parts factory. You said it was undemocratic.

What a difference a year makes. Today, your own Minister of Energy announces the future of Ontario's hydroelectricity system, not before the people, not in the Legislature, but at a private Bay Street club where the public isn't welcome.

Premier, it's the people of Ontario who pay the hydro bill. It's the people of Ontario who own the electricity system. Why is your government, which talks about

democracy, only interested in the views of the profit-takers, the fee-takers and the commission-takers of Bay Street when it comes to hydroelectricity?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I can only say that the member must not be familiar with the contents of the announcement that was made today in the documentation by way of background or the like that was made available to everyone, because what this plan is going to do—and I would tell you that the minister has worked very hard on this.

It is thoughtful, it is methodical, it is responsible and it will ensure that homeowners and small businesses alike can participate in a stable, predictable rate regime that will be part of a broader plan to build more generation in Ontario, to incent more conservation and to ensure that we can, over the long term, have in place a reliable, sustainable supply of clean electricity in Ontario.

Mr Hampton: Premier, the question was, why is the future of Ontario's hydroelectricity system, why is the announcement not being made here in the Legislature, not to the public of Ontario but to the profit-takers, the fee-takers and the commission-takers of Bay Street?

I think I know why, because the announcement is all about private power. The announcement is all about saying to the investors, the profit-takers, the fee-takers on Bay Street, "Oh, under the Liberal plan you'll be able to make a lot of money," but what that equally means is that the hydro bill of the average person in this province is going to go up and up. The Toronto Star told us today that it's going to go up by 20% under the changes you've already introduced.

My question is, under what the minister announced at Bay Street, that it's a wide-open welcome to the investors there, how much more are you going to push up people's hydro bills?

Hon Mr McGuinty: It's no surprise that I take issue with the member's characterization of our announcement today. I think the member would do well to remember that the largest expansion of private generation that took place in the history of this province came under the NDP government, and that was through non-utility generation. I'll tell you why the NDP government moved in that direction: because they thought it would be more cost-effective and would be better for the environment. I think they were right in both cases.

What we intend to do is preserve the public assets through OPG and to invite the private sector to join us in creating the necessary generation. I just don't think any objective, reasonable observer would say to OPG, "Yes, we trust you to generate the necessary 22,000 or 23,000 additional megawatts we're going to need between now and 2020. We think the appropriate thing to do is to issue a call for all hands on deck. We will do our part in the public sector and we will invite the private sector to join us.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr Hampton: Premier, you should read your own minister's speech, because what's very clear from the

speech, which he wouldn't give in public but gave to the profit-takers and the fee-takers, is that in terms of your government, all of the supply in the future will be by the profit-driven people: the Brascans, the remnants of the Enrons. That's very clear.

It's also very clear, because the people of Ontario have had experience with this under the Conservatives' failed experience, that that means higher hydro bills. So I think since you gave the speech at Bay Street to a private club, an exclusive club, you owe it to the people of Ontario who have to pay the bill, how much is their hydro bill going to go up now that you've crawled in bed with the same people the Conservatives were so in love with, all the people who want to push up the hydro bill, who want the Eleanor Clitheroe style salaries, who want the expense account, the yacht, the limousine and the 15% profit.

How much is this going to push up the average person's hydro bill? What's it going to do to small business? You at least owe them to tell them that today.

Hon Mr McGuinty: I think when it comes to the debate over hydro, we should bring a little less religion and a little bit more math. The Conservatives have all kinds of faith in the markets, and we know the painful lessons that we were able to draw from that recent experience, where people, homeowners in particular, were exposed to the vagaries of the spot market. The leader of the NDP would have Ontarians run back and cling to the apron strings of old Mother Hydro.

We think there's a better, more responsible approach, and that's the one that we are taking. We are preserving a regulated market for homeowners and small business people. They will have stable, fixed prices that will not be set by us in government. Frankly, what we've done, and I'm talking about all political stripes here in the past, is that we've shied away from doing the responsible thing and we left a multi-billion-dollar debt. An independent party will now set those prices on an annual basis, and homeowners and small businesses in particular will have fixed, stable pricing.

Mr Hampton: Premier, I'd be careful when you cast aspersions at the Conservatives. Remember, you voted for that policy too. You were out there saying, "Deregulation, privatization is the answer."

Let me tell you the position you've put people in now. When the Conservative experiment has failed—and it has clearly failed—it means that we are in the vulnerable position that California was in. California, after the market failed, went out and signed long-term, expensive private contracts for power, and they'll be paying through the nose for the next 20 or 30 years. That's exactly what you've set up here—exactly what you've set up.

You're not closing the market. You've said to your friends on Bay Street, "You build the power plants. We'll sign the expensive contracts. You'll make lots of money. And oh, by the way, we'll keep a price cap in place for a while to hide it from the average Ontarian. When they find out down the road, they won't like it, but then it will be too late."

You made the announcement today on Bay Street. Stand up and tell the people of Ontario today: How much is profit-driven power? How much are the Brascans, the Enrons, the Eleanor Clitheroes going to make, and how much is it going to cost the average person, the average small business person on their hydro bill?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Again, I thank the member for the question, but I want to remind him and people who have a real interest in this matter that the largest expansion of private power generation in the history of this province came under the NDP government. I also want to remind people that power rates went up by some 40% under the NDP government.

What we are doing is bringing a responsible, pragmatic approach to the management of our hydro needs, our electricity needs in the province of Ontario. We have been told that we're going to be short some 25,000 megawatts by the year 2020 unless we begin to move forward. No real generation was built under the watch of the previous government, and very little under the NDP government before that. We are finally taking the bull by the horns, bringing a responsible approach. We are providing an assurance to homeowners and small business in particular that they will have fixed, stable pricing.

TAXATION

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Premier: Mr Premier, I'm very curious about your finance minister's rather Clintonesque description of when a tax hike is really a tax hike. According to your new definitions, is harmonizing the PST with the GST a tax hike?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Finance is anxious to speak to this, Speaker.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I'm still pondering the "Clintonesque" reference.

Let's begin by clarifying what we're talking about here. The member is fuelling speculation on the possibility of removing the exemption on prepared meals under \$4. Now, the opposition members are all invited to fuel speculation to the extent that they want. My responsibility is to make sure that when we bring in a budget, we achieve the objectives that we have set out from the moment we were elected. The first thing is to set a new foundation for a new generation of economic growth, and in order to do that, we are going to have to clean up some of the horrible messes of mismanagement, the fictions and the fantasies that were the underpinning of that previous administration. We're going to do all of that, sir.

1410

Mr Hudak: It was a simple yes or no question. Thank God I didn't ask what the definition of "is" is. The new McGuinty meal tax effectively harmonizes the GST and the PST on food products under \$4. I think we all know that GST and PST harmonization would result in new taxes on children's clothing, newspapers, farm imple-

ments and across the board in the service sector. In fact, it would be a whopping \$1-billion tax hike.

Mr Premier, your Minister of Children and Youth Services effectively slipped up in a radio interview last fall. She said, "We will harmonize it. We believe in the long run that it will be in the best interests of taxpayers." Mr Premier, just say "yes" or "no." Are you going to harmonize the PST and the GST?

Interjection.

Hon Mr Sorbara: My friend the Minister of Education reminds me of a great nursery rhyme about the cow jumping over the moon. I want to say to my friend from Erie-Lincoln that when we bring forward a budget, it will take a number of very significant steps to start to put this province on a stronger financial footing. I hesitate to go back to the Magna budget, but that budget represented some of the most fanciful budget-making in the history of this province, including—

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): The country.

Hon Mr Sorbara: "The country," says my friend the Minister of Education—\$2 billion in phantom asset sales, \$800 million in so-called cuts that were not identified, not even in a general sense.

Those folks, over the course of eight years, worshipped at the altar of tax cuts and left this province, after eight years of economic expansion, in a horrible financial mess. We are going to begin to fix that.

AVIAN INFLUENZA

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Minister, the avian influenza outbreak in British Columbia has been devastating for the producers, the processors and the suppliers of that province. It sent shock waves across this country throughout the agri-food industry. Yesterday and today, poultry producers have been meeting in London at this province's largest poultry trade show. When I spoke with my husband last night, first he told me about the piece of equipment that he wants to buy for the barns, but then he told me about the conversation that he'd been having with fellow producers, processors and suppliers, and the need to guard against an outbreak of avian influenza in this province.

Minister, on behalf of the producers in this province, I would like to ask you, what safeguards do we have in place to prevent such a catastrophe in Ontario?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I want to thank the honourable member for her question, because it is a very important question. First and foremost, we need to recognize that this is an animal health issue. This is not a food safety issue. Poultry products are safe to eat.

I think it's important to say, as well, that we have recognized very clearly that through the Commissioner of Public Security, we need to play a very active, proactive role. We have in place an avian influenza working group. That working group consists of members of the Ministry

of Agriculture and Food. The Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care, Municipal Affairs and Housing, and the Environment are part of that.

As well, we're working very closely with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, because they are the ultimate lead in this issue. Most importantly, we're working and maintaining very close ties with the poultry industry. It's important that we continue to work with them and ensure that we can keep the health of our flock safe. Biosecurity is the key.

Mrs Van Bommel: Poultry producers are very proud of their farms. They're very proud of the hard work they've done in building their flocks and maintaining their infrastructure for marketing. They've work hard on biosecurity and on the on-farm food safety programs which are audited by third parties. At the conference yesterday, participants were required to walk across disinfectant mats as they entered and left the conference. Yet during question period yesterday, the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant asked the Minister of the Environment about the dumping of dead chickens in landfills. He seemed to imply that we are going to have an outbreak of avian influenza in this province. Minister, how can we assure the public that everything is being done by farmers to protect Ontario's supply of turkey, chicken and eggs?

Hon Mr Peters: I thank the member for the question. I think it is very unfortunate that we are fearmongering in this province. We have a poultry industry that is very much committed to ensuring the safety and the health and welfare of its flock. We have a poultry industry as well that is coming to the assistance of our producers in British Columbia and the challenges they face. We're going to ensure that there are no shortages of chicken, turkey and eggs in this country. We need to all work together, and that's one of the advantages of supply management.

We're very proud of the on-farm food safety program that the poultry industry has put in place, because they recognize that they need to be leaders. We encourage the industry to continue to do what it can to promote the biosecurity of their farms. We, as well, through our Web site at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, have advice to help ensure that proper biosecurity measures are in place. We are proactive in this province, and I think it is inappropriate for anyone to fearmonger about the situation that's out there.

TAXATION

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Tourism and Recreation. Last year, Ontario's tourism industry faced some difficult challenges. The rising Canadian dollar, mad cow and the power blackout continue to haunt an industry that was already devastated from the impact of SARS. The struggles of the tourism sector are documented in a report by KPMG which indicates that the Ontario tourism sector declined by over \$1 billion in 2003. In light of this, Minister, how can your government even hint at this 8%

soup-and-salad tax that will place an additional \$214-million burden on this industry in the first year alone?

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): I was wondering when that question would finally come. I thought the strategy of the opposition, if the House leader had developed a strategy, would be to start asking different ministers to speculate on what must be in the budget. Of course, as I remember my friends on the government side, whenever we asked questions about the budget when we were in opposition, Mr Flaherty, sitting across from me, would always say it would be improper to speculate on what might be in the budget. And I agree entirely. I agree entirely with former Premier Eves and former Minister Flaherty that it would be improper to speculate on what might be in the budget. All these pieces of speculation out there are only speculation, and I know the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke would not want me to engage in idle speculation.

Mr Yakabuski: Just as the minister was expecting that question, I was pretty much expecting that answer.

Minister, in its first six months, your government has done nothing but choke the life out of this industry. You've raised the property taxes of small businesses and working families; you've increased their hydro rates, breaking yet another promise; you've increased labour costs; and you've floated an endless list of hurtful trial balloons. This past month alone, your government lost 25,000 jobs in this province. Instead of promoting job creation, you persist in kicking this industry in the stomach with yet another tax increase. I want to tell you that this new tax is mean-spirited; it is flat-out wrong. You know it, and the people of Ontario know it. Will you urge your Premier to drop this ridiculous idea now?

Hon Mr Bradley: I say to the member that it's very difficult to ask any member of the government to drop anything that just happens to be idle speculation that I see out there. Having been a member of opposition, I understand what your role is. I understand that fully, and I don't resent it. I don't become angry with you people over this. I've seen it happen before, I must say, with other oppositions and other governments. I want to say to the member that that's idle speculation.

But I want to tell him that people in the tourism industry are exceedingly pleased with the amount of support that they're getting from this government. In fact, I had the opportunity to announce, in these difficult times, an additional investment of some \$30 million in the tourism revitalization program for the first six months of this year.

We have a number of things that are happening that are very positive. If you have another question, I'd be pleased to elaborate on those a little later on in question period.

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AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Minister, the automotive sector has become an integral part of the Brampton community. The DaimlerChrysler Brampton assembly plant is the largest private sector employer in the city. DaimlerChrysler has called Brampton home since 1960 and employs over 3,600 highly skilled individuals.

Brampton is also host to a number of auto parts manufacturing and distribution companies. Some of the employers include Massiv Die-Form, Matcor Automotive and a Ford parts distribution centre. Many industry players have taken advantage of our skilled workforce, proximity to markets and infrastructure to build their companies.

As you can see, my community depends on this industry for their economic prosperity. Minister, what will the program you announced yesterday do to encourage more auto industry players to locate and remain in Brampton?

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I want to thank the member for a very important question. Yesterday, I had the privilege of joining the Premier in announcing Ontario's new auto investment strategy.

Applause.

Hon Mr Cordiano: Yes, thank you.

The strategy entails a \$500-million investment in the auto sector, which will be leveraged to have up to about \$5 billion worth of investments in the auto sector. This will enable the industry to become far more competitive, be at the cutting edge of technology, and the program is designed to be far more flexible.

This is what Buzz Hargrove of the CAW said: "This strategy was something Premier McGuinty talked about during the election. He has listened to us, and this strategy is going to be good for Ontarians....This is a positive and welcome change from previous governments who took our sector for granted when other jurisdictions were stepping up to attract investment and jobs that we want for Ontario."

This strategy is going to work. This strategy is going to bring new investment to Ontario, and I'm very proud of it.

Mrs Jeffrey: Minister, thank you for your comments. Although my community has a foundation for a very successful auto industry, I do have some concerns about the future of the auto industry in Ontario. The auto sector employs thousands of Ontarians and creates massive economic spinoffs. I understand that places like Alabama and Mississippi are aggressively trying to get this kind of investment. We hear stories about offers for direct subsidies to lure investment. Minister, how could communities in Ontario, like Brampton, compete in this kind of global marketplace?

Hon Mr Cordiano: It's very important to recognize that what we're doing here is investing in our people, our greatest asset in this province. We're going to make our workforce, which is already highly skilled and very capable and very productive, even that much better with the investment that we're making. It will enable us to

attract, as I say, additional R&D to the auto sector, making the industry far more innovative and far more able to compete with jurisdictions around the world.

There are 1,200 other jurisdictions that are seeking the same type of investment that we have right here in Ontario, and we are poised to be very competitive when this strategy is put in place. I have every assurance that this is going to be a big success for the province.

TAXATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): A question for the Premier: Yesterday, at Rankin's restaurant on Hamilton's main street, I launched the NDP's petition campaign against your outrageous 8% soup and salad tax. Most of the folks who come to Rankin's restaurant for the \$3.99 breakfast special are seniors living on a fixed income. They're some of the 1.5 million people across Ontario who purchase a meal for under \$4 each day. Do you know what they all have in common? They don't have much money.

Your tax is going to hit all those folks who struggle on a low or modest income. That's who you're going after. It's a direct attack on them. So I ask you today: Stand up and categorically tell those people who struggle on low and modest incomes that you're not going to tax their \$3.99 breakfast special.

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The members of the opposition can raise these issues on a kind of ad hoc, one-off basis as frequently as they like. But as they would have said when they enjoyed the privilege of serving on this side of the House, it is not responsible for us to comment on whether specific initiatives are going to be in or out of the budget. I appreciate the advice that has been offered, and continues to be offered, with respect to the budget, and we very much look forward to delivering it.

Mr Hampton: The people who have been ad hoc, have been, for example, your health minister, who was out promoting this, or your education minister, who was out promoting this tax. The document you sent around to the so-called pre-budget town halls specifically said that the provincial sales tax should be expanded to include meals that cost under \$3.99. So it's you and your ministers—your government—who have been promoting this idea.

I'm simply asking you now, if it's not on the books, if it's not part of the budget, to stand up and say categorically to those low-income and modest-income people, who are already struggling, that it's not on. You're the one promoting it. If you want to kill the idea, say so now and say it clearly.

Hon Mr McGuinty: I think it's wrong to frighten seniors. The member opposite would have seniors believe that this is now part of the budget. No such decision has, in fact, been made. It was raised as part of our consultations with the people of Ontario. We raised the question and said we would listen to Ontarians, and I want to assure you, Mr Speaker, that we are listening.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. As you know, farmers in Ontario have a tough time making ends meet because of things that are well beyond their control, like BSE and bird flu. Now you're proposing to tax meals under \$4. These are meals that often consist of soup and salads made of fresh produce grown locally in your community and mine. Taxing these products will hurt a revenue stream that is still available to our farmers. This is something you can control. Will you support Ontario's farmers and tell your Premier not to impose this tax on the poor and on our farmers?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I think our Premier has demonstrated unequivocal support for the farmers of this province when he announced \$64 million in transition funding. I think we're all very proud of the work our farmers do in ensuring that safe, healthy, nutritious meals, from the farm gate to your plate, turn up there on a regular basis. I think it's very important that we do everything we can to stand behind the agriculture industry.

We do want people to eat healthier in this province. If people eat healthier, it helps us save money in health care costs. We need to ensure that people are buying Ontario products. So support the Ontario dairy industry, fruit industry, vegetable industry and grain and oilseed industry. That can help us. I think the honourable member knows it's not appropriate for me to speculate on any issue that's going to be in the budget.

Mr Hardeman: I've heard every minister on the opposite side, when asked this question, refer to speculation and that somehow we are creating this speculation. I have here a sheet of paper that was passed out by the Liberal government at their town hall meetings, and there are some suggestions in here that they should talk about.

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When it comes to tax incentives, one of the government recommendations, for example, is that they "do not tax prepared meals that cost less than \$4, therefore creating an incentive to purchase fast food. The government loses \$200 million every year by not collecting this tax." The key required to implement this is, "The government could eliminate this exemption and recover the lost revenue by charging retail sales tax on prepared meals that cost less than \$4." That's what they're saying.

I'm also very concerned when the Minister of Agriculture suggests that eliminating the ability of people to buy these cheaper meals that farmers produce from fresh food will make the food healthier for the people consuming it. I just find that incomprehensible that the Minister of Agriculture would say that when I buy local produce at a local produce shop it's not healthy.

Hon Mr Peters: It's very unfortunate that the former minister forgot a very important part of this ministry, the food ministry. It's very unfortunate that the former agriculture minister forgot that.

We're very proud of the work that the 58,000 farmers do in this province in making sure that we have safe,

healthy, nutritious, clean food, and the 200 commodities produced in this province. I challenge that member on the other side, and quite honestly I challenge every one of us in this House, to make a conscious decision when we go to the grocery store to buy Ontario, to support Ontario farmers, to support Ontario products. We need to do that.

I think it's extremely important that we recognize the important role the farmers play in ensuring that if we do eat the proper products, if we do enjoy a healthy lifestyle, we can save this health care system a great deal of money.

Once again, I think it's very inappropriate for a member to speculate on what's going to be contained in the Minister of Finance's budget.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): My question today is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Minister, I would like to ask you about the announcement you made yesterday in Hamilton. The announcement was great news for my riding of Oakville, which is the home of a Ford assembly plant and the head office of Ford of Canada.

Ford employees and the people of my riding have concerns. Ford has said it would like to invest \$1 billion into the community and the plant to turn it into a flex plant and ensure its viability over the coming decades. The company has been very vocal in saying that it would need the government to become a partner in this investment. Minister, what does this announcement mean to Ford, the Oakville assembly plant and the town of Oakville?

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I want to thank the member for a very important question. I want to say to the member that yesterday's announcement will help not only Ford and Oakville but the entire province. There isn't a part of this province that isn't affected by the auto sector, and this initiative will be a significant boost to the Ontario economy right across this province.

The strategy calls for a \$300-million investment that will create or retain 300 jobs. It will enable Ford Motor to bring about their flex plant at Oakville, and we're looking forward to additional proposals. It will make them far more innovative. We've identified five categories for investment opportunities.

I say that the last 100 years have been a proud achievement for the province of Ontario, for Ford Motor, and we want to make the next 100 years as successful as the last 100 years in the automotive sector.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): Minister, I have another question just to follow up on my colleague from Oakville. In my community of London, the auto industry is the largest industry. We are home for many different automotive industries, like Ford, GM and Sterling. In December, TransForm Automotive announced an investment of \$15 million in London. It would

employ about 150 and can expand to 450. What's your strategy to help maintain the growth and hire more people in London?

Hon Mr Cordiano: As I say, the auto industry is a very important industry to all parts of the province, London included. There are 400 auto parts manufacturers that employ 93,000 people in this province. That's significant. There are 14 different auto assembly plants, and 47,000 people are employed directly in assembly. The sector accounts for 20% of the manufacturing output of this province, 45% of the exports and 4% of GDP. It is a huge business.

This new investment strategy is going to make the industry far more competitive. It's going to make it more innovative. It's going to make our workforce far more skilled. In fact, I expect that we will receive up to \$5 billion worth of new investment in this province in the auto sector, which will create thousands of new jobs and provide an additional boost to the Ontario economy.

TAXATION

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): My question is for the Minister of Education. I think he's here somewhere. This is with respect to food in the schools. There are students here today who use cafeterias, I'm sure, in their schools. In fact, over 80% of the meals sold in school cafeterias in Ontario, we're told, are less than \$4. They are free of retail sales tax presently. The government proposes, apparently—so it is said in the papers—to impose a retail sales tax of 8%, which would be 32 cents more on each one of those meals every day for these students here in the province of Ontario. At the same time, the minister is talking about healthier food in our elementary schools. This is a case of, "I'm from the government and I'm here to help you. I'm going to give you something with one hand, and I'm going to charge you 32 cents more every time you come to the cafeteria."

Will the minister stand in his place and assure the students and the parents of the province of Ontario that his government is not going to charge them 32 cents extra every time they buy a meal in a cafeteria?

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): It is interesting, of course. I was more hopeful, with the introduction of the question, that the member would be talking about the health and well-being of kids, that he wouldn't be trying a stunt on their behalf. We have yet to have one question from the critic in the opposition about the health and well-being of kids in public schools.

He makes a joke about the government being there to help you. This is a government that let kids lose, year over year, more of their access to physical education, more of their access to things that would keep them healthy. I thought that might be the member's interest. I thought that might be what he would stand up on today.

I thought I might hear as well some kind of apology when it comes to tax matters. Rather than talking about something that is speculative, I thought the member might be standing in his place to apologize for trying to

give away tax revenues to private schools, at the direct expense of our kids and public education. That's all the member opposite is known for, and I would be happy to hear in a supplementary what he would like to do—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr Flaherty: This is the way the Liberal government thinks. He sees nothing wrong with making food more expensive to the parents and children every day in the schools of the province of Ontario. He doesn't answer the question.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Could you allow the member to ask his question? A lot of shouting is coming from this side.

Mr Flaherty: He stands up and doesn't answer the question. He says, in effect, "Yes, we're going to do this." So does the Minister of Finance; so does the Premier. They can say no, but they've chosen day after day in this House not to say no, as we said no when that same tax was proposed.

Stand in your place and say you won't impose that cost, 32 cents a day on parents and children in the province of Ontario. This is the way they think: They're going to lose \$200 million. That's the way it was in their speaking notes. It's not their money. The money belongs to the people of Ontario. The government doesn't have the right to take more money from them; they're already paying enough taxes in this province.

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Hon Mr Kennedy: I wish the member opposite no ill will, but I think there's a special political purgatory for people who stand in this House after cutting the incomes of the poorest people in this province and then purport, for their political advantage, to have some concern for their welfare and well-being. This is coming from the member who was the Chair of the education committee of cabinet that cut in half the amount of money to help poor kids in this province learn, who took the dollars away that boards across this province had targeted for kids who had learning challenges. We have, in this province, one of the saddest legacies, one of the highest dropout rates in years, because year after year those kids could not be heard by the members opposite, could not be heard by that government. I can tell you, as much as we don't like the line of questioning from the member opposite, those kids have got a hearing with this government. We've got our priorities straight, and they're going to get help and a future—

The Speaker: Thank you.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): My question is for the Minister of Finance. For a number of years now, people across Ontario have been hurt by skyrocketing rates for auto insurance. During the election, our party promised to enact reforms that would reduce auto insurance rates by an average of 10%. What is the status of the government's commitment to lower auto insurance?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): As the Premier was just saying, very good news indeed. In fact, this very day, the superintendent of financial services has issued his report on auto insurance rate filings that arose as a result of Bill 5, our act to lower auto insurance rates. I can tell the House that in that report, some 55% of the auto insurance market has reported and has had new rates approved. I am happy to report to this House that that report shows an average rate reduction of 10.15%.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. These standing ovations are taking away time from the opposition to ask questions. I would ask you to refrain from doing that.

Hon Mr Sorbara: Just to be clear, as a result of these new filings, drivers who are signing new policies will be able to take advantage of these rates right away. For drivers who are renewing their policies, these new rates will bring them, on average, rate reductions of some 10%.

Ms Di Cocco: Your ministry certainly is to be commended for the work you've done over the last six months since we've come to office to bring about these reductions in rates. What else are we doing to improve consumer protection in this area?

Hon Mr Sorbara: Just to give credit where credit is due, I want to pay tribute to my parliamentary assistant, Mike Colle, who did most of the work on this matter.

Our work is far from done. This represents the completion of phase 1. We will be monitoring very closely the balance of the filings that will be sent in to the Financial Services Commission over the course of the next month or so.

The next package of reforms will include enhanced consumer protection, a very important initiative; increased competition within the market, which will have a further downward pressure on rates; and the improvement in availability of services to those injured in auto accidents.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Health. On March 31, I urged you to provide additional funding to the Northeast Mental Health Centre to stop budget cuts and protect programs and staff, and to my knowledge, no additional funding has been allocated. I ask you today, are you going to provide additional funding to the centre, and when?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The member asks about a serious issue, and I acknowledge it. The issue of mental health support for mental health services in our province, I've mentioned in this House before, is one of those which is chronically underfunded. I say to the member that the government is currently developing its plans for the future fiscal year, and we hope to be in a position to make announcements with respect to that soon. I would tell the member that I have not made any announcement

around that to date, but we're working on this within the ministry on a priority basis with my colleagues who are delivering these services to children and youth. When we're in a position to move forward, we will.

Ms Martel: Minister, I can't stress enough to you how critical this situation is. The board has a \$2.3-million deficit. They are making cuts now to try and balance their budget. The first round of cuts very negatively impacts on children. Those cuts were made on March 26. The second round of cuts is due tomorrow and will impact adults and community mental health services. This centre provides critical mental health services for children and adults right across northeastern Ontario. They need to have additional funding now.

Minister, I would ask you again, in light of the board meeting tomorrow where additional cuts are going to be made, will you announce funding now so that the Northeast Mental Health Centre can save its programs, its services, its staff and the services it provides to people who suffer from mental illness in northeastern Ontario?

Hon Mr Smitherman: As in my earlier answer, I acknowledge the challenges these programs are under, and that program in particular. We're working on trying to come up with priority funding for a variety of mental health programs across Ontario. I would just repeat to the member that when we're in a position to make an announcement, we will.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Joining us in the Speaker's gallery today are Representatives Joseph Rivet, Bill Huizenga and Daniel Acciavatti from the House of Representatives of Michigan. Please join me in warmly welcoming them here.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I also want to take this opportunity to remind members that it is the last day here for our pages. I know you all want to join me in thanking, in the most disciplined manner that we can have, these wonderful pages who have served us so well.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government was elected after promising in their election platform that they were committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors but are now considering delisting drugs and imposing user fees on seniors;

"Whereas prescription drugs are not covered under the Canada Health Act unless dispensed in a hospital;

"Whereas the federal Liberal government refuses to acknowledge this as a necessary health service despite the Romanow report's strong support for a national drug program;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately commit to end plans for the delisting of drugs for coverage under the Ontario drug benefit program;

"To immediately commit to ending plans to implement higher user fees for vulnerable seniors and to improve the Ontario drug benefit plan so they can obtain necessary medications; and

"To instruct Premier McGuinty to demand more health care funding from Ottawa instead of demanding more funding from seniors."

1450

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the parliamentary tradition in Ontario of presenting annual budgets in the House of the Legislative Assembly has existed for decades; and

"Whereas the previous government in 2003 showed disrespect for our public institutions and the people of Ontario by presenting a budget inside a private, for-profit auto parts factory; and

"Whereas the previous Speaker of the Legislative Assembly condemned the actions of his own party's government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to uphold parliamentary tradition and hold a public presentation and debate of the 2004 budget, and every budget thereafter, by our publicly elected members of Parliament inside the legislative chamber."

I sign my name to it, as I agree with it.

TILLSONBURG DISTRICT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition here signed by a great number of my constituents and constituents from surrounding ridings. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital has asked for ministerial consent to make capital changes to its facilities to accommodate the placement of a satellite dialysis unit; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has already given approval for the unit and committed operational dollars to it; and

"Whereas the community has already raised the funds for the equipment needed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care give his final approval of the capital request change from the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital immediately so those who are in need of these life-sustaining dialysis services can receive them locally, thereby enjoying a better quality of life without further delay."

I affix my name to the petition.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I have a petition here from the residents of Vaughan that says:

"Whereas the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act is intended to protect and secure sensitive lands for the good of the people of Ontario; and

"Whereas the council of the city of Vaughan enacted conformity documents on June 23, 2003, to advance those goals; and

"Whereas the Minister of Municipal Affairs, despite requests in July 2003 from the region of York, the Toronto Regional Conservation Authority and the city of Vaughan has yet to issue the order pursuant to section 18 of the act to amend the official plans and zoning bylaw of the city of Vaughan to conform to the Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the minister immediately approve the conformity documents of the city of Vaughan and without reference to a council resolution of March 8, 2004.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I have a petition that concerns the Ontario drug benefit program, and I want to thank Norma Penny of Wasaga Beach. Ms Penney took a great deal of time to go around and get hundreds of signatures for this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals by no means campaigned on raising the rates associated with the Ontario drug benefit program; and

"Whereas the majority of seniors, many of whom live on a fixed income, cannot meet the expense of higher costs for essential medication; and

"Whereas seniors in Simcoe-Grey and across Ontario should never have to make the choice between eating and filling a prescription;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To cancel any plans to raise costs for prescription drugs for our seniors and to embark on making vital medication more affordable for all Ontarians."

I've signed this petition.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I have a petition. Some 6,000 names will be coming in on this petition, worked up by Joan Faria and her volunteer colleagues, including an 84-year-old blind man who went door to door to gather these signatures. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To immediately commit to action and funding to ensure the rights and protection for our senior citizens living in nursing homes and retirement homes throughout Ontario."

RECREATIONAL TRAILERS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I have a petition here. It's from all over Ontario, and it's from the campground people.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas recreational trailers kept at parks and campgrounds in Ontario are being assessed by the Municipal Property Assessment Corp, MPAC, and are subject to property taxes; and

"Whereas owners of these trailers are seasonal and occasional residents who contribute to the local tourism economy without requiring significant municipal services; and

"Whereas the added burden of this taxation will make it impossible for many families of modest income to afford their holiday sites at parks and campgrounds;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That these seasonal trailers not be subject to retroactive taxation for the year 2003; and that the tax not be imposed in 2004; and that no such tax be introduced without consultation with owners of the trailers and trailer parks, municipal governments, businesses, the tourism sector and other stakeholders."

I'm pleased to support this on behalf of the thousands of campers in the province of Ontario.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by a number of students, to which I will affix my own signature. It says:

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and

occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario's professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry or re-entry of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce."

I am pleased to add my signature to this petition.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition that's been signed by people from all over—Owen Sound, Meaford, Allenford, Hanover, Walkerton, even from people from Sydenham township. There are a lot of students and teachers here today from Sydenham township. The petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government has said in their election platform that they were committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors and are now considering delisting drugs and imposing user fees on seniors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To halt the consideration of imposing an income test, delisting drugs for coverage under the Ontario drug benefit plan or putting in place user fees for seniors, and to maintain the present drug benefit plan for seniors to cover medication."

I have also signed this.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I want to welcome the young folks from Sydenham township too, because the member, Mr Murdoch, was actually the reeve of that township at one time, I think. This petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations

for improvements to design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on source water protection which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I'm pleased to sign this and I present this to Brendon.

LCBO OUTLET

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I have a petition for an LCBO agency store in Baxter.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the LCBO agency store program is intended to revitalize our small towns and villages, and to provide rural consumers with responsible and convenient access to LCBO services,

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make available to the village of Baxter an LCBO agency store."

I agree with this petition and I've signed it.

1500

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'd like to read the same petition into the record, into Hansard again.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I'm pleased to sign my name.

SEWAGE SLUDGE

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas we, the residents of Wasaga Beach, wish to bring forth our concerns regarding the transfer of approximately 5,700 tonnes of 14-year-old sludge (which contains metals) from the North Simcoe transfer station, to our recently closed landfill site. To date, there are no EBR requirements for hauled sewage.

"Due to this and the geography of the Wasaga Beach site being so close to the longest freshwater beach in the world, and other sensitive areas, there exists a threat to the environment and the public's health. The questionable product should be moved to a desolate location. Once damaged, the environment and people cannot be replaced;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sludge from being transferred to Wasaga Beach."

I agree we this petition and I've signed it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Before I get to orders of the day, I rise, pursuant to standing order 55, to give the Legislature the

business of the House for next week: Monday, April 19, 2004, second reading of Bill 18, the Audit Statute Law Amendment Act; Tuesday, April 20, second reading of Bill 49, the Adams Mine Lake Act; Wednesday, April 21, second reading of Bill 56, Employment Standards Amendment Act; and Thursday, April 22, second reading of Bill 49, Adams Mine Lake Act.

On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice respecting the proceedings for consideration of Bill 42, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act to freeze the salaries of members of the Assembly until the end of fiscal year 2004-2005.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Caplan: I move that, upon completion of consideration of the motion for second reading of Bill 42, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act to freeze the salaries of members of the Assembly until the end of fiscal year 2004-2005, the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called immediately, whereupon the Speaker shall put the question on the motion for third reading without debate or amendment.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

MPP SALARY FREEZE ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LE GEL DES TRAITEMENTS DES DÉPUTÉS

Ms Broten moved, on behalf of Mr McGuinty, second reading of the following bill:

Bill 42, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act to freeze the salaries of members of the Assembly until the end of fiscal year 2004-2005 / Projet de loi 42, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative en vue de geler les traitements des députés à l'Assemblée jusqu'à la fin de l'exercice 2004-2005.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): It's a pleasure to rise today to speak before the Legislature on Bill 42, the MPP Salary Freeze Act. Bill 42 is a bill of principle. It is a bill that exemplifies leadership through the exercise of responsibility in public service. This bill, if passed, would freeze MPP salaries until April 1, 2005.

As MPPs we are here because of our commitment to public service: our commitment to our constituents, our commitment to the people of this province and our desire to build a better Ontario. We are here to contribute in the way we are best able, in the way that we find our skills best suited. We are here because we believe in Ontario and its people, and believe that our efforts can make it the best place to live, learn, work and build a better life for our families. We are all here, I hope, in common camaraderie, although perhaps some days this camaraderie is less obvious than others. We are here engaged in the common pursuit of wanting to make Ontario a better province.

Bill 42 is, at its heart, about serving the public, spending responsibly, being accountable and reaching back to the fundamentals of governance at a time when fundamentals are most needed.

This bill is about voluntary restraint. In this time of significant fiscal challenges, shattered by a debt left by our predecessors, a debt which is a great burden on all people of Ontario, it is imperative that we not only talk the talk but that we walk the walk. The hard-working people in all of our communities across Ontario expect no less. We all need to recognize the fiscal reality in which our province finds itself. This bill does just that.

It is important to clarify again what this bill is and what it is not. First, Bill 42 is not a signal; it's not a sign or a precursor to our fellow partners in civil service regarding any intention to legislate wage settlements.

Second, it's not a signal to MPPs that their work is not valued or important; quite the contrary. It is the value of being an MPP that comes from the contributions that we make each and every day to ensure that the government makes decisions in the public interest. That value is not 1% or 2.7% or 25%; that value is measured in the good that comes from the public service, the feeling you get when you help a constituent with a problem, support legislation that helps protect our air and our water for future generations, and the list goes on. That feeling is priceless.

Third, it is not a signal to the Integrity Commissioner, who has the arduous task of setting MPPs' pay, that his role will forever be removed. It is simply an acknowledgement that at this time, in this fiscal environment, we as legislators must lead by example.

Our profession is unique in many ways. One way in which it is unique is that it allows for the self-restraint of wages. To vote against this bill is to ignore the need to develop and implement a collective solution to the fiscal situation in our province.

1510

In voting for this bill, we recognize the most fundamental element of governance: making decisions and acting in the public good. MPPs, irrespective of party affiliation, personal beliefs or personality differences, are all here, I believe, because we are dedicated to this province. As colleagues, supporting this bill gives us the opportunity to demonstrate a united commitment to the public good at a time when our province faces such significant challenges.

I urge all MPPs to support Bill 42 and to demonstrate their leadership through the exercise of responsibility and public service. Simply put, saying no to a pay raise at this time is in the public good.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Questions and comments?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I suspect it is going to be a remarkably short debate this afternoon. I suspect that relatively few members of the government caucus are going to want to speak to this bill. I suspect that the carefully drafted speech of the member who spoke—for whom I have regard; I have to tell you, I like

her—could be the sum total of the government members' participation in this debate.

I find it remarkable that, just as Liberals didn't want to speak to a bill which would give them a 25% salary increase and, in fact, condemned and scourged New Democrats who spoke to it to the final member and did everything they could to delay, obstruct and, indeed, defeat the 25% increase, that just as Liberals were disinclined and disinterested—they wanted to grease it up like a greased pig and slide it through in the dark of night when the press gallery was absent. They wanted their 25% salary increase and they condemned New Democrats for daring to want to debate it, for daring to try to obstruct it and for daring to try to defeat it.

Well, New Democrats were successful in defeating it, make no mistake about it, because the New Democrat exposé of the agreement, the accord, reached between the Conservatives and the Liberals to give themselves a 25% salary increase soon became a matter of public focus. Neither the Conservatives nor the Liberals were successful at concealing their agreement, and the Criminal Code has terms for that agreement, which I'm loath to use because you, as a lawyer, might find them unparliamentary—but, by God, if you could read my mind, you'd know what I am thinking.

We will be speaking to this in around 10 more minutes' time. I invite people to stay tuned. Howard Hampton and I will be addressing this bill, utilizing and exhausting all of the time available to us.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I heard the member speak, and I noticed that the Liberal government chose one of their new members to stand and speak to this bill. They obviously don't want one of their former members up speaking, one of the members who was here when they voted themselves a process of a 25% pay increase. But that is the history of this.

The Liberal government, when they were in opposition, conspired, were complicit in a strategy with the Conservatives to give themselves a 25% pay increase, and they thought that was perfectly acceptable.

In fact, while the wages of the lowest-paid, those who work for minimum wage, were frozen, the Liberals were going to give themselves a 25% pay increase. While those who are unfortunate and have to rely on the Ontario disability support plan, which hasn't been improved now in 10 years, would have had their incomes frozen, the Liberals conspired to vote a 25% pay increase for themselves. While those people who were so unfortunate as to have to deal with Ontario Works had their incomes cut and then frozen, and were harassed on an almost daily basis, Liberals were prepared to participate in a process that would give them a 25% pay increase.

I can see that the reason this member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore was chosen to give this speech is because she wasn't among that rabid bunch. She is someone new. But history is still there, and history—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): In all fairness to the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, she is the

parliamentary assistant to the Premier. I had that title under Ernie Eves, and I was very honoured to have it. I can tell you that whenever the Premier introduces a bill into the House, the lead-off is normally done by the parliamentary assistant.

I just wanted to make that correction. I hope you don't mind that.

The Acting Speaker: Response by the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore?

Ms Broten: I'm pleased to take a few moments to speak to this legislation and to the comments my friends opposite have made. I guess the best remark we can make at this point about the difference between the members on this side of the House and those opposite is the fact that we want to talk about the future and not the past. We want to talk about how Ontario can and should be in the years to come. We want to be part of a government that has increased the minimum wage for the first time in many years, that is committed to remedying the flaws and problems with our ODSP and OW systems, and that is going to lead by example. That is what this legislation is about. It's about being part of a government that is going to be responsible, that is going to take the appropriate steps, that understands what public service is all about and clearly understands why we are all here.

We are all here to build a brighter future for the children in this province, to make sure that the elderly in this province have a hospital to go to when they need it, and to make sure that we are a caring and compassionate province. We have to lead by example in order to do that, and that's what this legislation is all about. I am pleased to be moving it on behalf of the Premier as his parliamentary assistant. I look forward to seeing this legislation pass and building a brighter future for the next generations in the province in the years and months to come.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'm going to be sharing my time with the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I just have a few comments that I would like to get on the record.

I will begin my remarks on behalf of our party by indicating that we will be supporting this legislation, and then I would like to put some facts on the record. I've been here since 1990 and I can tell you that this issue of pay increases has been a bone of contention for the entire time that I've been here. I suspect it has always been an issue that's contentious. It has been very difficult for members to vote themselves an increase and to take a look realistically at the value of the work they do.

I would just remind the members here that, under Bob Rae, everyone in the House between 1990 and 1995 did take a 5% reduction in their salary. I would also like to let people in the House know that when Premier Harris took over in 1995, there was actually a further 5% reduction in the salary level. So this is certainly not unheard of, and I would say to some of the members of the governing party, be prepared for more, because it is

very difficult, once you start down that slippery slope, to stop the slide.

I would also like you to know that when our government came into office in 1995, in order to further reduce expenditures, we reduced the number of MPPs from 130 to 103. You might ask, "Why did you reduce it to 103?" We made the decision that we wanted to have the same geographical boundaries as the federal members of Parliament. So again, that was a cost saving because we had fewer MPPs in Ontario, and of course less money needed to be invested in changing boundaries.

But I would like to put on the record that although today we, the 103 MPPs, represent the same geographical areas as our colleagues in the federal government, our pay today is \$85,240, and I understand that the salary of a federal member for dealing with the same constituents as we do is \$139,200. I think it's important to put that, because you know what? I personally don't believe that our duties and responsibilities are any different than the federal members'. I think we have to carefully consider whether or not we are going to continue to undervalue the work we do.

1520

I know one of the issues I'm working on today on behalf of my constituents is a very important issue. We deal in this House with issues that really matter to people: educational issues, environmental issues, safety issues, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board issues, people who are desperate to get health care. I know each member of this House works hard.

I just want to mention one of the responsibilities I am currently involved in. I have people in my community, I have people in this province who are looking to us to provide support for Fabrazyme. These are people who suffer from Fabry's disease. As of April 25 they will no longer have access to Fabrazyme, to the therapy they are going to need to stay alive. So I am hoping and I am optimistic that the Minister of Health will follow the compassion that has been demonstrated by the Minister of Health in the province of Alberta, and will recognize and announce that these individuals will receive access to Fabrazyme. I hope he will do this on compassionate grounds until such time that a final decision on approval of ERT is made.

These are the issues we deal with in this House, issues that really matter to people. Yes, we have a very important job and we work hard to do the job in the best way we possibly can.

I would also like to indicate that when our government was in power after 1995, we also eliminated the per diem. At one time members, when they sat on committees, received a per diem. We got rid of that. We no longer get that money. So this is not first time decisions are being made that we believe are responsible and in the best interests of the people in Ontario.

Another decision we made was to scrap what some people liked to refer to as the gold-plated pension plan. But do you know what's frustrating? No one in this province realizes that we don't have a pension plan. In

fact, I want to read from the North Bay Nugget of March 30, 2004, which says, "Holding back MPP wages is symbolic for McGuinty, but hiking them would have caused backlash from taxpayers who already cringe at the gold-plated pension plans available to elected members."

Here is a leading newspaper in the province of Ontario that in the year 2004 still does not know that there is no pension plan for members of provincial Parliament.

So despite any of the changes that have been made, I just want to tell you, we've tried to make these decisions in the best interests of the people in the province, but if the media can't even articulate and accurately convey what has been done, it's just a little bit difficult.

There's not a lot more that I want to say. I do want to comment on the article today by Jim Coyle in the Toronto Star. He makes some comments here about politicians, "Pity the Underpaid Politician—No, Seriously." He says here:

"Whether I liked them or not, there were some things they tended to have in common." He's talking about politicians, having been in the press gallery for 25 years. "As a species, they had the courage to put their views on the record and their names on the line. They were generally competitive, committed, hard-working, idealistic (at least in the beginning), determined to make a difference, and as conscious of the honour and duties and of their position as they were its privileges.

"I can't think of many who got into it to get rich or as a ticket to easy street."

Then he goes on to say, "And I can't think of many ordinary citizens ... who could have been endured the intrusions, abuse and spotlight elected office brings." It's interesting to hear that comment from a journalist.

Then we hear from Bob Rae, who writes in his memoirs—and I think we should all remember this: "Politics is about values and power, courage and service ... leadership and compromise. Above all, politics is necessary...."

I would just remind the members in this House that the work we do is honourable work. We are certainly entrusted with tremendous responsibility. Each day we try to do the best job we can, and we will continue to do so. We will continue to move forward and represent our constituents throughout this province to the best of our ability.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I know you were sort of looking for me to be here.

Interjection.

Mr Murdoch: I had a school here from my riding and I wanted to talk to the kids. They've seen how we perform in here, and I had to remind them that maybe they shouldn't do the same at school as they saw people doing here. I wanted to make sure they knew that.

Interjections.

Mr Murdoch: All parties. This is nothing new to here.

I want to speak on this bill today and not so much about our salaries and what we do as about the procedure

we have in this House. Quite frankly, I don't think we should be here today debating this. We should be debating something like health care, education or agriculture. That's what we're supposed to be doing.

That's why some time ago our salaries were put on to the Integrity Commissioner, whom your government and we over here feel is a very responsible person. This was what we did some time ago. I remember I was part of that, I introduced my own private member's bill, and that happened. A year later, our government took it and, with the help of the Liberals, I might say—I don't believe the NDP voted for it, but I do believe the Liberals voted for it when it came up—our salaries would be put to the Integrity Commissioner. The Integrity Commissioner would look at what we make and come up with some recommendations. Each year, the Integrity Commissioner would look at that and recommend to this House what we should be paid.

Well, we ran afoul somewhere. We had an election about year ago, and I must say that our leaders over here and leaders over on the Liberal side wimped out. They were afraid to take on the NDP on this issue. There's no doubt we were as bad as the Liberals. They didn't want this. The Integrity Commissioner at the time had looked at things and looked at our salaries, compared what we do to what the federal members do and compared to what other members do across this nation. They at that point recommended—and when they recommend to the Chair or to the Speaker, it's law—that there be a 25% increase for MPPs. That was after the Integrity Commissioner looked at this problem. He looked at what the federal people made. They have the same ridings as we do, and he recommended that. As I say again, our leader, who was the Premier at the time—and I'm not making excuses for us—and the Liberals—no doubt McGuinty was in on the deal—said, “We can't run an election with that. The NDP will tear us apart. They didn't vote for this. They will say they won't take their raises.” So somehow, through this system that we thought we'd get out of, they convinced the Integrity Commissioner to come up with no increases at this time and that we would look at it again in the fall, which he did—or I guess we're in the spring now—and recommended for this year, starting April 1, that MPPs get a raise of 2.7% or something like that, the cost of living.

1530

All of a sudden our friends on the other side, and I'm sure some of our leaders here, got all excited again. “We can't do that. Gee whiz, this is awful.” Well, we had a system here, folks. If some of you had been in municipal politics you'd understand that one of the hardest things was setting our own wages. When I came here, I thought we'd be different. We weren't any different—same thing. We'd argue here, like today. Maybe some of you might say I'm wasting your time, but whatever. We could be debating health, education, our farm issues. We could be debating that which is important.

Here we are today, debating a bill that takes away, again, the powers of the Integrity Commissioner which

we had handed over to him. Most municipalities are way ahead of us now. They've set up committees or boards to look after their wages, and they have to take it whether it's an increase, the same or a decrease. That's what municipalities are doing; they're starting to do that now, so they're way ahead of us here in this House. What we did is that we put it over there, and then every time he comes back, whether it's our government or your government, we wimp out. We've got no guts. We're afraid of the NDP, that they're going to go out there and say, “We shouldn't get a raise because this didn't go up and that didn't go up,” or whatever.

If this bill would say that we're freezing wages right across the public sector—like teachers, doctors, civil servants—then it would be more comfortable to deal with, because I would say everybody is taking a hit. But no, with this bill, we've got to be self-righteous here and say, “Oh no, this is just for us.”

We had a system, as I said, and we've wimped out. We had a chance to leave it alone, but unfortunately—and this isn't just the Liberals; it's our side too. Both sides are wimping out on this. We're going to have a voice vote, as I understand—no recorded votes. You wouldn't want anybody at home thinking you voted for a raise or something. You wouldn't want somebody at home to bring that up, would you? And I know some of my friends on the other side agree with me, but they won't be able to vote for it because there's no recorded vote. We're going to voice-vote this and let it go.

I'm very disturbed that this is a trend. We might as well not have wasted the time of putting it over to the Integrity Commissioner's job. It's strange, though; it's really strange, that it's coming from the Liberals. I have sat here for probably the last month listening to the questions from our side to the Premier about Mr Sorbara and his problems. Now, I'm not one to judge Mr Sorbara. He's always been a nice person to me, and I have no idea if he's in trouble or if he isn't in trouble. But I have heard this Premier say, day in and day out, “The Integrity Commissioner has cleared him. He must be OK.” Well, all of a sudden, they say the Integrity Commissioner said that a 2.7% increase would be fine for the wages, but that's no good. So you use him when you want him and you throw him aside when you don't want him. What is wrong?

But it's here, and it's not just your Premier who's doing it. It's our leaders. It's all of us. We are gutless. We are afraid to go up. The only ones who will stand on their principles on this are the NDP. I don't agree with them, but they have said, “No, we shouldn't,” and they've stood that way. We've all agreed. Some of these guys over here won't understand this, but we don't have pensions. We put that little, paltry part—what?—about 5% away. We had good pensions. I'll tell you right now, it was Mike Harris who took them away. We didn't have the guts to stop him, and it happened. Of course, the Liberals at that time agreed, and we went on and took the pensions away.

Now we have some integrity officer who's going to put in our salaries and we won't even let him do that.

What has become of this place? There's no democracy around here any more. Representative democracy is gone from this province. You guys didn't take it away; it was gone long before you got into government. But your not doing anything about it is the problem. I see day after day that you stand up and vote and you stand and clap like the trained seals we were. You're doing the same thing. You did campaign that you would change it, but this bill is not changing it, folks. Unfortunately, you're not changing it.

I want to read something the Premier said in the House: "The Integrity Commissioner himself has reviewed this particular matter"—the deal with Mr Sorbara—"The Minister of Finance has acted appropriately and responsibly in the circumstances, and I believe that ends the matter." Then we should be leaving other things—if you want to sit there, day after day, and put your case that he is right, I'm not disagreeing with that. But then we had this deal where we were going to send it there and he would do our pay increases or decreases or whatever.

It's nothing about what we make. We may be paid quite fine. The fact is that we agreed in this House a couple of years ago that that's where it should be. An independent person should set our wages. We should not be doing that. We haven't done that, folks, and now we've gone to another pattern. What's going to happen next year when he comes back and says, "Maybe they should be catching up"?

You've got to realize that you fellows do the same ridings as your MPs, the same ones. You probably do twice as much work as they do. You're here more often; you're closer to your people. They make approximately \$60,000 more a year than you, and they have a great pension. They have a pension. After two terms there, they can retire at more than teachers get in pensions.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Gold-plated pensions.

Mr Murdoch: Yes, gold-plated pensions. Look at this little thing. As I say, it was this 2.7% cost of living, and we messed that up. Where are we going, folks? You guys are going to have to start thinking. You are the government now, and you've got four years to go with this. I've been through it. I was there for eight years, and I was in opposition five years with the NDP, so I understand what's going on. Let me tell you: Start making rules like this and you're going down a slippery slope.

I don't know how much time we have, but all I know—

Interjections.

Mr Murdoch: Do you want me to quit?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): Let's have another by-election.

Mr Murdoch: You want to have a by-election? You've called one.

If you want to get into by-elections, you guys called one and then you let your Premier pick your candidate. What a thing to do, guys. Don't get into that. Now you're starting to sound like federal Liberals. You're starting to

sound like the federal guys. You let your Premier pick your candidate.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: No, that didn't happen.

Mr Murdoch: I'm sorry, it did happen. Read the Star. You guys used to tell me the Star was the bible. The Star was the Liberals' bible. I can remember you over here telling us that if it said so in the Star, it must be true. They've said you picked your own candidate—maybe a good candidate, I don't know.

Interjection.

Mr Murdoch: Well, I have to leave that for you to read for me.

Interjections.

Mr Murdoch: We can't get off track here, Mr Speaker. I know you'll tell me to stay on topic. I can't let members from the other side get me off topic, which is fine; I'd love to discuss their issues.

The issue here is what we're doing in this House, why we're letting this happen. I have to leave it to you guys in the majority, the vast majority over there, to see that things like this don't happen.

The member from Kingston should know well. He was in municipal politics before he came here. He should know quite well that that is one of the hardest things to do there. Probably the municipality of Kingston now has a board that picks their salaries. Probably a board or commission says, "This is what you should be paid." Most municipalities are doing that now. We in this House caught up with them a couple of years ago and gave it to the Integrity Commissioner.

What happens, though, if he comes in and the government doesn't like it? They pass a bill, which we're debating. We've wasted a whole afternoon here today. We could have debated something of importance, like health care, like our agricultural problems, like education. We could have been debating that here. But no, we have to debate our salaries again, and we're not getting anything anyway.

I'm just telling them over there that they're falling into the same trap we fell into, and we had eight years. They're doing it in one year. They're going to have done everything bad in one year that we did in eight years. We weren't perfect, and that's why we're over here. If you guys over there keep doing things like that, do you know what will happen to you? You'll end up back over on this side. You'll be sitting back over here.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Not all of them.

1540

Mr Murdoch: Well, not all of them. Some won't even end up here. As Mr Kormos says, some of them won't even get here. That's what happens to you. We had more than are sitting here now. I know some guys who aren't here.

This is what happens when you make mistakes like this and you don't have some guts. You have to have some guts in this place, and we don't have any. We don't have any, fellows, and that's a problem. You have to start standing up to your leaders. Do not let those in that front

office run everything. We over here made a lot of mistakes by letting them do that, and this is the kind of trouble we got into. I'm telling you guys not to do that.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): What about a pension?

Mr Murdoch: A gentleman just went by and asked about his pension. I know he's a long way from a pension, but we don't get any.

Interjections.

Mr Murdoch: Blame it on the whip. We used to like to do that too.

Anyway, I'll wrap up. I had some notes here, and I think I've gone through everything. I may have missed something, but all I'm saying is that I know this will pass. We'll have a voice vote and we'll all go out of here patting ourselves on the back: "Oh, didn't we do something great?" I just want to see what happens when the Liberals have to deal with OPSEU and the doctors. Will they be telling them, "No, we froze our wages"? We'll wait to see if they have guts to do that. What you're doing here is going down the slippery slope. We had it sorted out, and you've messed it up.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Kormos: Billy, you had 36 minutes left. My goodness, I was hoping to hear the iconoclastic voice of the member for Bruce etc—

Mr Murdoch: Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr Kormos: Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, whose students and teachers I was pleased to meet here.

The member talks about gutless politicians. Really, the reluctance of politicians to deal with this issue head-on in a responsible, open and public way is the ultimate demonstration of gutlessness. It's as if there were 100-plus eviscerated corpses here that lack the guts and other stuff necessary to deal with this issue on the record and in a public way. I'm very much looking forward to the 30 minutes I'm going to have in a few minutes' time, because I find it remarkable that, other than Ms Broten, not a single government member would want to speak to this bill—not a single one. It's just like when they voted themselves a 25% salary increase. Not a single one wanted to speak to it, and they chastised New Democrats, who were trying to block the 25% salary increase. They castigated this small group of seven New Democrats—

Interjections.

Mr Kormos:—eight, nine, who opposed the salary increase, who voted against it, who tried to derail it, who tried to send it out to committee. Let nobody be fooled by the Liberals, because it was Ernie Eves himself who, when the heat grew during the election, killed the 25% salary increase.

Mr O'Toole: It's a real pleasure to rise, out of respect, to defend the position of the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound—he speaks here so infrequently, but his voice is always heard, usually just straight in the media—and also of the member for Niagara Centre, who has been here longer than I have. I can speak only from my own personal experience.

I'm a great supporter of the position taken earlier by the member from Kitchener-Waterloo. It's patient,

respectful and not condescending of the important role of public service. I honestly believe that people listening would want to get a copy of her remarks, because it shows the lack of understanding in the public. I'm looking across at one of my peers, and I know how hard he works as the member from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge. He was the mayor of Pickering and probably made more there than he does now. I don't know think he knew that, but now he does. He knows there's no pension. Most of his council and most of his constituents don't realize the sacrifice he made for public office.

Where this needs to be sorted out—basically the discussion here is important. The Premier—I don't know if it's a broken promise or not; certainly we like to use that message—must have done a poll or something on this. The 2.7% isn't going to make a great deal of difference. The debate is out there. I know that in Durham region there has been a wide debate on how much the non-elected regional chair, Roger Anderson, makes, and I think a positive response has come out of that. I think he's going to eventually have to run for election.

But I looked yesterday, and the queen of all politics is Hazel McCallion. She makes more than the Premier—and arguably she should. I was surprised that David Miller, the mayor of Toronto, arguably the third most important politician elected, makes less than the regional chair and less than many of the mayors in Durham and other areas. This is a big discussion. The people of Ontario only get what they pay for. Public service is important, and I believe it is important to represent your people.

The Acting Speaker: Any response?

Mrs Witmer: I will just briefly respond to the comments that have been made. I don't think there is much more to say other than to indicate that we are going to be supporting this bill and this resolution to move forward in order to freeze the salaries for this year.

I think we have pointed out today that since 1990 we have been making similar decisions. We have been looking at our salary and I think we really need to seriously consider the work we do, the responsibilities we have vis-à-vis the federal members of Parliament. There are 103 in this province who have similar responsibilities to ourselves. I think we have to continue to ask ourselves the question as to what is an appropriate level of reimbursement and we need to make sure that we recognize the important work that we do.

The Acting Speaker: Any further debate?

Mr Kormos: My goodness, this debate is proceeding along at a rapid pace. This is truly remarkable. This is miraculous that here we are on Thursday afternoon and members seem to want to wrap this up, second and third reading all in one day, and indeed from the government benches but five minutes of contribution by way of debate. Mr Murdoch, this is truly unprecedented.

But for the debate around the Liberals and Conservatives trying to increase their salaries by 25%—there, once again, it wasn't even a matter of a five-minute contribution. Time after time after time—couldn't get a Lib-

eral to speak to that, could we, Mr Murdoch? Couldn't get a Conservative to stand and speak to it either.

I am particularly grateful to my colleague Ms Martel from Nickel Belt. Even though she had other things to do, I prevailed upon her to stay in the House to give consent to the proposition that this bill should move immediately to third reading without debate. I just couldn't bring myself to do it. I said, "If I am in the room, no way can I consent to that. I am going to say no. Please, Ms Martel, you stay here. I understand an agreement was reached between our whip and House leaders or whips of other caucuses."

The whip for the Conservatives—the staff person darn near swallowed his bubble gum when he thought the deal was going to be kiboshed. All Hades broke loose. "What is going on? We promised to get this thing swept under the rug quick as a boo." Not that the rejection of the 2.7% increase is in and of itself something that's bad. It's not going to carry any great weight one way or another. But the reluctance and fear to talk about salaries here is truly remarkable. Although there is reluctance and fear to talk about them publicly and on the record, there is an incredible zeal to increase them.

I take issue with the member of the Conservative caucus who talked about Mr Harris and his 1996 legislation and suggestion of somehow a salary decrease. When the bill passed in this House that eliminated the so-called tax-free portion, incomes were grossed up so that there was approximately a \$10,000 across-the-board salary increase. It was like what some would insist happened during the transfer from English imperial measurement to metric, that manufacturers seized the opportunity to reduce the amount of cereal in the Cheerios package. In the course of the 1996 vote, eliminating the tax-free portion, members actually got a \$10,000 increase; oh, and a pension plan that resulted in million-dollar buyouts for political leaders, payouts that were in the millions of dollars for political leaders, and that cost the taxpayer a fortune because of the gross mismanagement and the dirty little secret that was entailed in the pickup and cleanup of the flotsam and jetsam, before all was said and done.

1550

So let's talk about the minimum wage here. Let's talk about the minimum wage of \$85,000 and the fact that out of 71 government members, only four receive the minimum salary.

Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): Peter, how much did you take?

The Acting Speaker: Order. Are you in your right seat, member? I don't think so.

OK. Continue.

Mr Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker.

Out of 71 government members, only four receive the base salary; 67 out of 71 receive stipends in addition to the base salary. Of course the Premier does. Of course cabinet ministers do. Well, parliamentary assistants do, but there's at least one per cabinet minister; some have a couple. A parliamentary assistant doesn't make \$85,000

and change; a parliamentary assistant makes \$97,429. Then we've got parliamentary assistant after parliamentary assistant; a minister who makes \$36,000 in addition to the \$85,000, with a salary of \$121,297. Then we have a caucus chair who receives an additional \$10,655, taking that person up to \$95,895. We've got a Chair with an additional \$11,934, taking them up to just shy of 100 grand, at \$97,174.

You see, out of 71 members, there are only four who are in the losers' club. These are people who get nothing. These are people who didn't even become Vice-Chairs. Some people come by the losers' club honestly. As a matter of fact—and he had a very moving private member's resolution this morning—I suspect that the member for Peterborough comes by the losers' club honestly. He's probably perceived as a little bit of a loose cannon. He's inclined to criticize his own government from time to time in what's called survival politics in the riding back in Peterborough. So you see, you become a member of the losers' club either because you've earned it, as I suspect the member from Peterborough has—he's being punished. He's being told, "No, you criticized the government." If you constitute—oh, dare I say it—the role of a loose cannon, then you're in the losers' club. So there is the member from Peterborough in the losers' club.

The member from Sault Ste Marie—in the losers' club—insofar as I'm aware does nothing but tout the party line when he's back home. But somehow he finds himself in the losers' club, not even in the position of Vice-Chair—nothing, zero, zip, nada. He's in the losers' club.

There are only four members in the losers' club. In fact, there's the member from Mississauga West. The regrettable thing about the member from Mississauga West is that he's in the double losers' club, because not only does he not receive any stipend whatsoever, not even Vice-Chair, but they put him on the regs and private bills committee. As you know—you've been here a good chunk of time—regs and private bills committee is punishment. It's not an award or a reward for anything; it's punishment. You can be effectively comatose and be on it.

The other member of the double losers' club, of course—again, this warrants some brief analysis—is the member from Davenport. The poor member from Davenport, one of the most senior members in this House, a member whose Liberal caucus colleagues should admire him for his political astuteness, is in the losers' club, and not only in the losers' club; a senior member of the caucus, a person with seniority over all these new Young Turks just elected, gets zip, nada, zero, nothing. But he's in the double losers' club because he's on the regs and private bills committee too. I know the member from Davenport. I think he has displayed some real talent and commitment to the Liberal cause. Why does he find himself at the bottom of the pecking order, at the end of the food chain? The regrettable thing is that if there simply weren't enough perk jobs to go around so that you

had to have losers, because not everyone can be a winner, it would perhaps be of some solace.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: I put this to you: You have fewer losers than the Tories did. The Liberals have managed to perk up more members' salaries than even Tories dared do.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: No way.

Mr Kormos: Ask some of your colleagues, who will be pleased to point it out to you. Do you understand what I'm saying, Speaker? Proportionately, the Tories fed fewer perks to fewer people than did the Liberals—

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): With identical salaries.

Mr Kormos: —because you've got perk pigs. You see how what happens? You've got people who are perk pigs who use up perk jobs just to deny the losers the jobs. "What's a perk pig?" you say. Let me give you an example; those are the people with the red tabs beside their names: A perk pig is—

Mr Racco: That's not parliamentary.

Mr Kormos: Oh yes, it is—for instance, the member for Oakville. The member for Oakville is a perk pig. Let me tell you why. He's not only a parliamentary assistant, which grosses his salary up to just shy of 100 grand, but he's also the Chair of a standing committee. He doesn't get double-paid—you understand that—but he's consuming a perk job that one of the four losers could have. Do you understand what I'm saying? You could be the Chair of a committee if it weren't for the perk pig, the member for Oakville, who's only getting paid for one. Let's be fair: Being the Chair of a committee is not particularly demanding or exhausting work. You've got the clerk sitting beside you and you don't have to participate in debate. Most of the time you don't even have to worry about following your whip's instruction when it comes time to vote.

So you see it's a little—what do they say?—dis-ingenuous of the Liberals to talk about freezing their salaries while 67 of the 71 Liberal members have had their salaries grossed up from the base of \$85,000. It's peculiar that the only people who are really getting salary freezes are the four members of the losers' club, because 67 other members have already seen salary increases that take them just on the cusp of 100 grand a year, or well beyond it in the case of parliamentary assistants, and of course the Premier. Nobody denies the Premier that kind of salary, Lord knows, for the heat that he or she might take at any given point in time in our history. So be it. But then you've got the junket junkies. You have the losers' club, the double losers' club, perk pigs, and then you've got the junket junkies. You see, when you've got a caucus this big, and I've seen it first-hand, you've got to keep backbenchers quiet; you've got to keep them under control. You can throw them a bone.

The member for Sault Ste Marie gets nothing. Yet, seated one row behind him is the member for Thornhill, who's a Vice-Chair. How does the member for Sault Ste Marie feel that the member for Thornhill is a Vice-Chair and the member for Sault Ste Marie gets zip, nada,

nothing? How can the member for Mississauga West be comfortable with the fact that 67 members of his caucus have perks but he's the only one who really gets a wage or salary freeze? So you see, one of the things that a caucus has to do, for instance in this case, is tell the four losers, "Don't worry, your turn will come." That is designed to keep them in line.

In the case of the member for Peterborough, he probably knows that he's made his bed and he's got to lie in it. He's a bit of a loose cannon, a bit of a maverick—I admire that—in his riding. That's called good, grassroots politics and political survival, because even when their Premier and the government go down the tubes, members like that stay alive because they haven't been afraid to criticize or challenge their government. The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is a similar one. It's no surprise, no wonder, that he's back here at Queen's Park even after the drumming that the Conservatives took in the last provincial election. He's a maverick, a loose cannon, if you will. He wasn't afraid to take on Mr Harris or Mr Eves. Mind you, he suffered too, because it wasn't until Mr Stockwell—of all the mentors to have, I suppose, of all the guiding lights in that government—took him on as parliamentary assistant that the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound found himself in the losers' club. So look: losers, double losers, perk pigs, junket junkies.

1600

Then we've got the whole phenomenon of the fact that the Liberals and the Conservatives—and my leader made reference to them as having conspired. I appreciate that you accepted that word as being, well, acceptable; that there was a conspiracy between the Liberals and the Conservatives to try to slide through what amounted to a 25% salary increase. It was only New Democrats that stood up and spoke against it—every one of them. I've got to tell you, the reluctance to speak to this bill is part and parcel of the reluctance to speak to the amazing reality that people in this chamber, people in the job, yes, do have the power and the authority and the responsibility to set their own salaries.

The reluctance, shame, fear and trepidation about debating that—and I tell you, Mr Hampton and I are the only two members of my own caucus who wanted to participate in this debate—appear to be something that permeates the souls of politicians in general; the fear of being candid about the fact that we can set our own salaries, the effort to slough it off to an Integrity Commissioner, who doesn't appear so independent when, in the case of Mr Eves, Mr Eves sends him a letter and says, "I know that there was a ruling about the salary increase that Liberals and Conservatives voted for, the 25% one, but since it's not politically expedient at this point in time, perhaps you'd like to ignore that standard."

Here you go. Now you've got Liberals attempting to demonstrate some sort of largesse by freezing salaries, by forgoing the 2.7% salary increase. The very rules that they were so enamoured with, that they pursued, that they promoted—all of a sudden they perceive it as being

politically expedient. But of greater concern is the fact that this may be a less-than-subtle message to other people who are earning their incomes at the taxpayer's tab. The concern, of course, is that this is a message to broader public sector workers: "Well, MPPs, government members, most of whom make close to 100 grand, if not more than 100 grand, saw fit not to give themselves"—

It's easy to say you're not going to take a salary increase when you're making 100 Gs a year, isn't it? It's not much of a sacrifice, but for the person making \$35,000, \$40,000 and \$45,000 a year, first of all, it is not only a 2.7% increase—or a 2.5%, 2%, 1.5%, 1.8%, 1.9% increase—of a smaller monetary value, it also makes a whole lot bigger difference to their lifestyles.

Where's the increase for people on disability pensions? Not a penny. Where's the increase for people on social assistance? Oh, those Liberal backbenchers, the ones who were incumbents and got re-elected, loved to rail, along with New Democrats, against the last government for having cut those social assistance benefits by 21.6%—22% if you round out the number. Where are those courageous people now, when in the course of this debate they've got the opportunity to make it clear to their own families, to their constituents, to their neighbours, to their friends, to their political supporters, that they are adamant that this government should keep that promise immediately?

There is something shameful and disgraceful about politicians who will pad their own pockets, who will take care of their own financial prosperity, but leave the poorest people behind and somehow tell people on social assistance and on disability pensions, "There's a deficit, so you, on the disability pension, and you, on social assistance, have to accept responsibility for paying down that deficit."

There is something disgraceful and shameful about politicians who will brag about forgoing a 2.7% salary increase when they're already in the top 4%, 5% or 6% of income earners in this province, in this country.

There's something, I suppose, at the end of the day, disturbing—and 16 years of it has disturbed me greatly—about suited people in general, but about the suits making pompous and arrogant decisions about the poor. Somehow, whether it's Mike Harris condemning women who are supporting their children on social assistance, telling them, "Don't get your allowance for pregnancy because you're just going to spend it on beer anyway," or whether it's Liberals who want to condemn the 21.6% slash of social assistance benefits by the Tories, yet who once they assumed power—it's over six months now, and those same people who suffered a 21.6% cut and who have seen no increase to adjust for cost of living, which probably puts them down somewhere at a level of 40% loss in purchasing power, haven't seen a penny, yet politicians who make among the top 4%, 5% or 6% of incomes in this province can feel overly proud about having accepted a freeze, when it otherwise would have been a 2.7% salary increase.

When you've got 67 out of 71 MPPs, a larger proportion of the caucus than even the Conservatives, receiving perks and incomes above and beyond the base salaries, I say to you that's disingenuous. It's disingenuous to whine and cry about the absence of a pension plan when every month, out of the public purse, money's deposited into an RRSP for each and every member of this assembly. You see, you folks—

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): You've got \$1.2 million in the bank. Don't talk about it.

Mr Kormos: Mario Sergio is unhappy. Mario Sergio needs surgery. Next time, administer Novocaine, nurse, before you start drilling.

Mr Sergio: Peter, you're not being fair.

Mr Kormos: He said I'm not being fair. Administer a double dose of Novocaine, because every member of the Legislative Assembly of course gets—what is it?—5% of the salary tax-free into an RRSP fund.

You see, you're the free enterprisers. You're the fans of this free enterprise economy who believe in self-supported pension plans. You and your business community friends say, "That's Freedom 55. I don't want the government telling me what to do with my money."

Here's a government and Liberal backbenchers who find themselves disdainful of folks who have to buy and do buy—they're not going to go to Bistro 990 around the corner here, or Bigliardi's in the evening time, or Canoe. Somebody mentioned Canoe the other day. Apparently that's an upscale, posh restaurant here in Toronto. I don't know about Canoe.

There's a government that wants to tax meals under \$4 to the lowest-income people in this province, yet they don't want to tax the people in their Rolls-Royces and Mercedes-Benzes and Lexuses and Land Rovers and high-priced vehicles like that. I find that incredible. This government feels real proud about taxing poor folk, about taxing senior citizens on fixed incomes, but they shake with fear at the prospect of rolling back some of the Harris-Eves Tory tax cut on the richest people in this province.

Then they proceed to blame those same poor folks and senior citizens and people on pensions. They seem to want to blame them for the deficit and expect them to help pay it off. I say that's wrong, and I say that politicians here—and I've known a few; I've known a whole lot—perhaps typical of politicians in most places in the world, but as gutless politicians, do you even earn what you're making now? As politicians who are afraid to take part in a debate, are you proud to accept the pay cheques you receive? As politicians who, yes, conspire to cut a deal so that an issue like this can be swept under the rug in but one afternoon without any debate on third reading, do you earn the salaries you're paid now? I mean, as politicians who are fearful of the responsibility that includes the responsibility to set one's own salary, do you deserve two thirds, do you deserve a half, do you deserve any of the pay you make?

1610

Oh, I've heard the arguments. I heard a Tory backbencher comment the other day. He was quoted in the press saying that he could make much more money in the private sector. Now, knowing who this person was, I doubted it because it just didn't strike me as being possible. But just recently, I've been briefed as to what that Tory backbencher's trade was and I realized that, yes, he probably could make more outside here than he could in here. But I tell you, at the end of the day, most people here have never made this much money before in their lives and they'll never make this much money again, make no mistake about it.

We haven't even begun to talk about the double-dippers—the lawyers, for instance, who maintain law practices; the business people, for instance—well, Speaker, please, the lawyers who maintain law practices and who double-dip, and other professions that may well be doing the same, the business people—I suspect there were far more of them in the last government, but who have continued to—is it illegal? Of course not. If it were illegal, some of them probably would have been busted. It isn't illegal. Is it morally, ethically wrong? Of course not.

But I've got a real problem with people who are in the top 4%, 5%, 6% of income earners who won't even address the substandard wage of the press gallery steward upstairs, who as you know can't belong to a union because he works directly for the Legislative Assembly, who doesn't have anybody directly bargaining for him but who earns a wage that is an embarrassment to every member of this assembly, and who has got members from each caucus fighting in the Board of Internal Economy currently, as of yet to no avail, to give that person at least some parity with similar jobs by similar workers for the Legislative Assembly.

So you see, here are a bunch of—I can't say it's just fat, white-haired guys, because it used to be—people of all shapes, sizes, stripes and colours, who earn themselves a good chunk of pocket change, who have no qualms about telling poor folk to wait, no qualms about telling people with disabilities to cool their jets, to rest their heels, because there's a deficit. After all, we have to pay down the deficit, and after all, Liberals, gutless wonders, are afraid to roll back any of the Harris tax cuts on the wealthy people in this province, the people who really can afford to pay it, but who are all hell-bent on increasing taxes for people who buy modest lunches at small mom-and-pop diners in the places where I come from in Welland and Thorold and Pelham and St Catharines, or anywhere in this province, quite frankly.

So here we are. The bill is going to pass. There will not be third reading on the bill because that's what the government wanted.

The Speaker is not sure whether the bill's going to pass. No, he's just exercising his fingers. I thought he was giving me the wavering gesture saying, "Maybe, maybe not." The bill is going to pass. There won't be any more debate. Liberal members won't participate in the

debate. Lord knows they're being paid to, but they won't stand up and participate in the debate for the 20-minute time slots that are available to them.

At the end of the day, it's not another proud day for the Legislature; it's a shameful day, because legislators were afraid, once again, to talk openly and candidly about their salaries. They're afraid to stand up on the record and say, "Oh, I think my salary's just right." They're afraid to stand up and say on the record, "Oh, I think I should earn more." They're afraid to stand up and say on the record, "Oh, I think I should earn less." They're afraid to stand up and say on the record that, really, freezing a salary means so little to Liberals in the current context because all but four Liberals received pay increases the minute they got elected here—or at least within a week or so—by virtue of the perk jobs. And it's not just cabinet ministers—people expect that—but parliamentary assistants: at least one and in some cases, I believe, more than one per cabinet minister; to Chairs, to Vice-Chairs, deputy, deputy, deputy, whips, deputy, deputy, deputy, thises and thats.

You've got people here far from the minimum wage of 85 grand and change. You've got people here in the top 4%, 5%, 6% of Ontario and Canadian income earners who somehow want to express some pride in freezing their salaries for a year when they've already received salary increases as a result of the 1996 legislation of approximately 10 grand a pop across the board, when they already receive 5% of their salaries paid tax free into an RSP, effectively to do what they want—well, one way or another for them effectively to do what they want upon reaching the age of 55.

Now there's an undercurrent of Liberals trying to cut yet another deal to restore a pension plan. Well, I tell you this: There won't be any deals to restore pension plans, no matter how eager and anxious the Liberals are to see a pension plan restored. There will be no deals to restore a pension plan. You people voted for the legislation. As I said, you made your bed; now you're going to have to lie in it. There was an effort to make yet another secret deal, another shameful, sad, pathetic deal. To slide a pension plan through like another greased pig won't cut it.

Thank you kindly, Speaker. I appreciate your patience with me.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? Seeing none, further debate?

Seeing none, Ms Broten has moved second reading of Bill 42. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The bill is ordered for third reading.

MPP SALARY FREEZE ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LE GEL
DES TRAITEMENTS DES DÉPUTÉS

Ms Broten, on behalf of Mr McGuinty, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 42, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act to freeze the salaries of members of the Assembly until the end of fiscal year 2004-2005 / Projet de loi 42, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative en vue de geler les traitements des députés à l'Assemblée jusqu'à la fin de l'exercice 2004-2005.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): His Honour awaits.

The Acting Speaker: The House is recessed to the call of the Chair.

The House recessed from 1622 to 1640.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario entered the chamber of the Legislative Assembly and took his seat upon the throne.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

Hon James K. Bartleman (Lieutenant Governor): Pray be seated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly of the province has, at its present meetings thereof, passed certain bills to which, in the name of and on behalf of the said Legislative Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller): The following are the titles of the bills to which Your Honour's assent is prayed:

Bill 15, An Act to amend the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 15, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur la divulgation des traitements dans le secteur public.

Bill 42, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act to freeze the salaries of members of the Assembly until the end of fiscal year 2004-2005 / Projet de loi 42, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative en vue de geler les traitements des députés à l'Assemblée jusqu'à la fin de l'exercice 2004-2005.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): In Her Majesty's name, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to these bills.

Au nom de Sa Majesté, Son Honneur le lieutenant-gouverneur sanctionne ces projets de loi.

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn until 1:30 pm on Monday.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Caplan has moved adjournment of the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Monday, April 19.

The House adjourned at 1642.

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Monday 19 April 2004

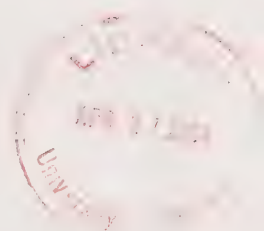
Lundi 19 avril 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 19 April 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 19 avril 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EDUCATION ROUND TABLE

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): It gives me great pleasure to inform the House that this past Saturday I held an education round table in partnership with parents and students.

The bad news is that it was necessary due to the failure of the Minister of Education, whose own consultations excluded many who are interested in education. The good news is that over the weekend I heard from independent school educators, secondary school administrators, People for Education, teachers' unions, parents, teachers and many others. No one was excluded. We heard a wide range of viewpoints on matters important to students and parents. I invited everyone to participate to make sure the voices of all the people of Ontario could be heard, not just the vested interests that the minister keeps in his back pocket.

We discussed the Ontario College of Teachers. We discussed how to educate for skilled jobs. We talked about early childhood education and special education. We heard from business leaders who want to contribute. We heard from parents who want more flexibility in the system. The minister needs to know that there are many great ideas out there, and I'm glad to report that it is possible to work with all the voices of the people of Ontario in order to improve our education system. I would encourage the minister to listen to all these voices from all sectors from all across the province, not just to a few.

CATHERINE LITTLETON

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I would like to speak today about Scarborough resident Catherine Littleton. Since becoming a volunteer over 13 years ago, Catherine has donated over 4,000 hours of her time to Providence Healthcare, a health care facility for older adults in Toronto. The facility is located in the riding of Scarborough Southwest.

When she became a volunteer, she asked to work in one of the most challenging areas, the palliative care unit, where patients with terminal illnesses spend their last

days. When she started volunteering in palliative care, Catherine changed beds, helped nurses and served patients their meals. She even fed patients who were unable to feed themselves. Through such intimate care, Catherine got to know many of the patients in her care, developing deep friendships with many. Sometimes Catherine would stay with them overnight, which was often the most difficult time for patients. She would work from 11 pm to 6 am, holding their hand, talking to them, getting them a cup of tea or a glass of water—someone who could just be there if they woke up and needed to see a friendly face.

Catherine, who lives alone with no family of her own, says that she keeps coming back to Providence because she is inspired by the bravery of the patients and enjoys the spirit of the community, working with other volunteers and nurses in the unit. On behalf of all my colleagues here in the Legislature today, I want to congratulate her on her volunteer work.

PAUL DOYLE

Mr John Yakubuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): On Easter Sunday morning, the people of the township of Greater Madawaska, in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, were saddened to learn of the death of their reeve, Paul Doyle, who passed away at Toronto Western Hospital after a brief illness.

Paul Doyle was born in Dublin, Ireland, on September 22, 1931. He studied accounting in Ireland and continued his business studies at the London School of Economics. In 1958, he came to Canada as an interim auditor for Alcan Aluminum. He spent 15 years with Alcan, rising to the position of secretary-treasurer of Alcan Australia. He later served as corporate planner for both the Hudson's Bay Co and Gilbey's, where he retired as president in 1987.

After retirement, Paul Doyle and his wife, Barbara, moved to the Griffith area, where he took an interest in local affairs, becoming reeve of Griffith and Matawatch-an townships in 1992. He served as reeve until the year 2000. In 2003, he ran successfully for reeve in the new township of Greater Madawaska.

Paul was well known for his drive and determination when dealing with an issue he felt strongly about, both in his own municipality and at county council.

Paul leaves behind his wife, Barbara, and their five children, Sean, Brian, Paula, Colleen and Terry, and their families. Paul Doyle was a man of many talents and interests. He will be greatly missed.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I'd like to highlight the very serious issue of support for mental health services for Ontarians. One in five Canadians is affected by mental illness. Most Canadians will be indirectly affected by mental illness through relationships with family members, loved ones and co-workers.

The Canadian Mental Health Association of Ontario strongly emphasizes that the capacity of community-based mental health services must be increased to meet the needs of people with mental illness in Ontario.

The East Algoma Mental Health Clinic is one such provider of community-based programs that are vital to the people of Elliot Lake, Blind River, Spanish and the surrounding area in Algoma-Manitoulin. I've met with a number of the staff and personnel involved with the East Algoma Mental Health Clinic, including Mr Pope, Ms Price and Ms Philbin Jolette, as well as a number of my constituents who have told me of the increased need for, and the value of, the community-based programs that this clinic provides.

I would like to emphasize the need for priority funding for community-based mental health programs that are chronically underfunded in Algoma-Manitoulin and across Ontario. For over 10 years, mental health community services have been the poor sister of our health services in general. It's time to transform this system and its funding. It's time to ensure that the clients and patients receive the services they need in their home communities.

TVONTARIO

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Dalton McGuinty wants to sell off TVO. His plans are in his little budget booklet in black and white. We say TVO is one public asset the McGuinty Liberals may "sell or lease ... to raise money."

This is what they say in the discussion paper re TVO: "Currently, the government pays \$54 million a year to operate TVOntario. Originally, TVO was created to help educate and inform Ontarians by supporting the education and training systems in Ontario. TVO now provides more broadly based public television. Is this the best way to spend money to achieve results in education?"

This is a serious misrepresentation of what TVO is all about. Right now, about 80% of TVO programs make their way into our classrooms and help our elementary, secondary and post-secondary students learn. By the end of next year, 100% of the shows will be classroom-connected.

Since 1970, the public broadcaster has been a world leader in educational broadcasting. In a 500-channel universe dominated by crass American infotainment, maintaining the one public broadcaster that delivers made-in-Ontario, commercial-free, learning-focused programming is absolutely essential.

When Mike Harris tried to privatize TVO in 1997, McGuinty opposed the sell-off. He said of Mike Harris, "This guy is driven by ideology. It's government run by extremists. They want to sell TVO as a matter of ideology."

The Liberals were right back then. There is no good reason to sell TVO. Let's oppose the sell-off.

1340

BEEF PRODUCERS

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I rise today to urge the members of this House and their constituents to support and aid our Ontario beef farmers.

In one of my first statements in this House, I spoke about the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, their struggle with the BSE crisis and Ontario's \$1.2-billion-a-year beef business. These farmers in this industry are still struggling, even with the recent \$1-billion aid for farmers announced by our federal counterparts. Many in my riding are worried about the lack of income, which may eventually lead to farm closures.

The beef and cattle industry is an important and integral part of Ontario's rural communities. Many cattlemen are still struggling to recover from the effects of the BSE crisis, as is noticeable in the recent farm suppliers' downturn in business, as their customers struggle with the financial implications.

As stated in this House previously, I'm proud that one of my first office accessories in room 330 here at Queen's Park was an "I Support Beef" poster provided to me by the Ontario Cattlemen's Association.

As the weather becomes nicer and we approach another great Ontario summer, I urge all members of this House to support our beef industry and to aid our farmers in their time of need. Get together with your family and friends. Go out to your local store and purchase a few steaks and have a barbecue while watching playoff hockey. And might I say: Go, Sens, go. Please do what you can and urge your colleagues, friends and constituents to also aid this struggling industry.

TAXATION

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I remain shocked that the McGuinty Liberal government has yet to back down on their plans to impose a new McGuinty meal tax on all meals under \$4. To date, my constituency office alone has received approximately 1,000 signatures on petitions attacking this plan.

Taxpayers' anger and confusion over the need to impose this politically bizarre McGuinty meal tax were also reflected in today's Toronto Star. Today the Star wrote:

"In a feckless move worthy of Inspector Clouseau, McGuinty and his minions managed to forge a coalition against them that consists of 22,250 restaurateurs in every part of Ontario, the Tories, the New Democrats, the Daily Bread Food Bank, the Canadian Taxpayers

Federation, senior citizens, students and food service workers.”

In fact, the only group that appears not to oppose this crazy idea is the 72 members of the Liberal caucus, but I wonder if that wall of solidarity is going to begin to crumble, because no doubt their constituency offices are similarly besieged with petitions in the number of, or probably greater than, those received by the opposition members.

I understand from a source in the restaurant industry that at least two Liberal MPPs will introduce petitions opposing this tax in the House today: the member for Stoney Creek and the member for Thornhill. Now, introducing a petition is a good first step, but a true test is whether a member has the courage to sign the petition. The test will be borne out after question period: Do they stand with their constituents against the tax, or do they take their orders from Dalton McGuinty's office?

BRAMALEA-GORE-MALTON- SPRINGDALE ECONOMY

Mr Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I rise today to acknowledge the tremendous efforts of three local constituents who have been recognized for their efforts to put my riding, Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, not only on the economic map of Canada, but the globe.

Two local companies, Display Transportation and Rodair International, and their respective presidents, Mr Richard Delongte and Mr Jeffery Cullen, were recently recognized by the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade for their commitment to promote the Canadian logistics service industry abroad. They were recipients of the ministry's Global Trader Awards of Merit in the area of expansion service markets. Both companies, while not the sexiest service providers, have carved out niches for themselves by providing excellent global service for their large network of clients.

The third recipient's story is quite different. Mr Michael Schultz does not head a global company; instead, he is a teacher at Chinguacousy Secondary School and a member of the Peel District School Board. He has been instrumental in making international business part of Ontario's secondary school curriculum and was honoured with a Leadership Award. He has worked to bring real-world practices into the classroom by providing students with the chance to start and run their own importing-exporting companies.

I rise today to recognize the contributions of three outstanding constituents of my riding.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Last Thursday, Energy Minister Dwight Duncan outlined a major government policy initiative. It was hosted by the Empire Club at the Royal York. I'd like to thank the minister for extending an invitation to me.

The minister repeated several times, “Ratepayers must pay the real cost of electricity,” but what he failed to tell them was what the real cost of electricity is. He went on to explain that he has increased it from 4.3 cents to 5.5 cents—that's 25%—and in fact it looks like there will be higher prices in the future.

In his remarks he had something for everyone: conservationists, environmentalists, investors, generators and, more importantly, bureaucrats—everyone except small consumers, individuals on fixed incomes, small business and agriculture. And people who bought the Medallion Homes with radiant heat or heat pumps, look out: You will be paying the true cost of electricity, with no help from this government.

He went on to speak about shifting peak demand, but try to tell that to constituents in the riding of Durham, like the dairy farm using between 8,000 and 10,000 kilowatt hours per month. That's a 27% increase in the rate.

I say yes to conservation and to learning to use electricity wisely, and I look forward to the Premier's statement later this afternoon on conservation and smart meters. Perhaps he should attach a smart meter to his Minister of Energy.

WEARING OF PINS

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I am pleased to rise to ask the House for unanimous consent. This week is National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week, sponsored by the Kidney Foundation of Canada. They have asked us if we would wear pins in recognition of that.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SAFE STREETS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA SÉCURITÉ DANS LES RUES

Mr Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 58, An Act to amend the Safe Streets Act, 1999 and the Highway Traffic Act to recognize the fund-raising activities of legitimate charities and non-profit organizations / Projet de loi 58, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1999 sur la sécurité dans les rues et le Code de la route pour reconnaître les activités de financement des organismes de bienfaisance légitimes et organismes sans but lucratif.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): The bill amends the Safe Streets Act, 1999, to provide

that the prohibition in subsection 3(2) of the act does not apply to fundraising activities that are conducted by registered charities or by non-profit organizations on the roadways where the speed limit is not more than 50 kilometres per hour as long as these activities are permitted by municipal bylaws. A similar amendment is made to section 177 of the Highway Traffic Act.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ENERGY CONSERVATION ÉCONOMIE D'ÉNERGIE

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): For most of our history, Ontarians have enjoyed an abundant supply of cheap, reliable energy. All the power we wanted was right at our fingertips at the flick of a switch. Today, we can no longer take our energy supply for granted. If we don't act soon, we will face an energy crisis. Our province is growing, with more homes and businesses being built every day. I'm pleased to report that our high-tech economy is thriving, meaning, however, that our industries, our homes, our hospitals and our schools all need more electricity than ever before. But at the same time, our ability to produce power is falling behind. Many of our nuclear plants are nearing the end of service and, despite advances in clean, renewable energy, Ontario continues to rely on dirty sources of energy, like coal.

1350

L'Ontario ne peut pas bâtir une économie forte pour le 21^e siècle sur des sources d'énergie vétustes. C'est pourquoi notre gouvernement a pris l'engagement de remplacer les usines à charbon qui polluent notre air et endommagent notre santé.

Ontario cannot grow a strong 21st century economy by relying on obsolete sources of energy. That's why our government is committed to replacing the coal plants that are polluting our air and damaging our health. After all, one coal-fired unit admits as much pollutant as 160,000 cars. The eight-unit Nanticoke facility represents the equivalent of the exhausts of 1.3 million cars. Replacing coal is the kind of real, positive, overdue change that our government ran on and that Ontarians voted for.

Because previous governments failed to act, we are faced today with an enormous challenge. We will need to refurbish, rebuild, replace or conserve 25,000 megawatts worth of generating capacity by the year 2020. To put that in some perspective, that is more than 80% of Ontario's current electricity generating capacity. To meet these goals through increased generation alone, we would need generation capacity about 11 times the size of Niagara Falls itself.

Our government has already announced plans to put 2,500 megawatts of generating capacity and demand-management initiatives in place no later than 2007, and

there's more on the way. But clearly, producing more electricity is only part of the answer. We also have to slow the endless spiral of increasing demand. It is simply not sustainable.

So we are now asking Ontarians to get involved in slowing that spiral of demand, and we will give Ontarians the information and tools they need to save money on their bills as they save electricity. When it comes to electricity, it is much cheaper for our province to conserve it than to generate it, and it's much cheaper for our consumers to save it than to pay more for it.

Some other jurisdictions have aggressively pursued conservation, but this province hasn't been as aggressive as it should have been, and that has wasted time and money and electricity. For example, California has conserved to the point that the average per capita consumption of electricity there is up 1% since 1975; here in Ontario, it's up 25%.

There are steps we can all take right now. For instance, if each of Ontario's 4.5 million households replaced four 60-watt light bulbs with compact fluorescents, the energy savings would allow us to shut down one unit at a coal-burning plant. Again, that is the pollution equivalent of 160,000 cars. Compact fluorescent bulbs seem more expensive on the store shelves, but because they last years longer and use up to 75% less energy than conventional bulbs, they can save you four times what they cost. They're a sound investment.

People with electric water heaters can save between 200 and 1,400 kilowatt hours per year—that's somewhere between \$20 and \$140 per year—simply by fixing leaky taps, insulating their water heaters and switching to more efficient shower heads.

Real gains could be made by doing things as simple as turning off the light or TV or stereo when you leave the room, unplugging appliances when you're not using them, or not using that large, mostly empty freezer that you might have sitting in the basement. That old, inefficient beer fridge in the basement may seem like your best friend at playoff time—and we all know where those are going—but every time you open the door, it's pay-up time because that fridge can be costing you about \$150 a year in extra electricity—electricity we cannot afford to waste.

There is so much that we can do. Taking a five-minute shower instead of a bath uses half as much energy—I say to all Ontarians that if there's anybody out there who knows how you can get a teenager out of a shower within five minutes, I would be delighted to receive that information. Turning down the water heater when you are away, and turning it down a few degrees all the time, can pay big dividends. Set the fridge at "cool" instead of "almost frozen." Turn down your furnace, even a few degrees, at night when you're under the covers. Keep appliances clean so they're efficient. The coils on the back of the fridge, the lint screen on the dryer, the air filters on your furnace and air conditioner all need regular cleaning.

Across Ontario, people can get an energy audit for their homes. These audits provide specific steps people

can take that could reduce their energy bills by up to one third. I learned just recently that if you were to leave your household computer on throughout the entire year, that will cost you in the range of \$250 for electricity alone; 60% of that electricity, by the way, is consumed by the computer screen, the monitor. These are the simple kinds of steps we're asking Ontarians to take.

En échange, notre gouvernement permettra à tous les Ontariens et à toutes les Ontariennes, qu'ils soient chez eux, dans leurs entreprises ou dans les bureaux du gouvernement, de sauvegarder l'énergie et d'économiser leur argent si durement gagné, tout en préservant l'environnement.

In return for those activities that we are calling upon Ontarians to undertake, our government will make it possible for Ontarians in every home, business and government office to save energy, save their hard-earned money and save our environment. Our government is taking bold action to make Ontario a North American leader in conservation. I'm not talking about approaches that have been used in the past, such as introducing a few government programs or printing glossy brochures. I'm talking about nothing less than creating a profound shift in the culture of this province, about moving from a culture of inefficiency to a culture of innovation, about moving from a culture of waste to a culture of conservation.

Our plan will give consumers, businesses, utilities and government the tools they need to use less energy and use energy more wisely. Together we will make a real change in the way we use energy in this province. Our government's goal is ambitious: to reduce electricity use by 5% across the province by 2007. But our government will also do its part. In fact, we will hold ourselves to an even higher standard. We will cut electricity consumption in all government operations by 10% over the same period. To help reach those targets, Minister Duncan has already announced the creation of a conservation secretariat headed by a chief conservation officer. Our government has appointed MPP Donna Cansfield to lead the conservation action team, which will promote our conservation initiatives around the province. We are going to provide the leadership that creates opportunities for savings, but it's up to Ontarians from all walks of life to make good decisions about how they use their energy.

Right now, most customers don't get a break on their bill if they use energy during off-peak hours when demand is lower. In particular, those off-peak hours range from about 10 o'clock in the evening until 7 o'clock in the morning. The reason they're not getting a break is because old-fashioned energy meters only record how much energy is being used and not when it is being used. Smart meters, together with more flexible pricing, would allow Ontarians to save money if they run appliances in off-peak hours. That's why we are directing the Ontario Energy Board to develop a plan to install smart electricity meters in 800,000 Ontario homes by 2007 and in each and every Ontario home by 2010. We will also expand and encourage the practice of net metering. Net metering will enable homeowners and

businesses generating renewable electricity to receive credit for the excess energy they are producing. This will provide additional electricity supply from clean, renewable sources such as wind and solar power.

We're going to launch province-wide consultations to allow people to participate directly in Ontario's new culture of conservation. We want to lead Ontarians in a very important conversation, and it has to do with coming together so we can meet a most significant challenge that faces all of us; that is, a desperate—I don't want to go that far; I think the minister's got the right language. We find ourselves in a predicament—it is not yet a crisis—and if we take the necessary steps, we will overcome this challenge.

1400

Leading the way in this new culture of conservation will be our young people. We will ensure that our primary and secondary school students have the resources they need to learn about conservation. This morning I had the opportunity to visit Cedarvale public school here in Toronto. I met with Ms Smith's grade 6 students. Subsequent to the recent blackout, students had begun to ask themselves what they might do to help reduce electricity usage at school, at hockey arenas and in their homes. They put together a number of pamphlets and provided me with a very interesting and exciting proposition that speaks to how much hope we can have in the future, because children, in particular, understand the nature of the issue and want to involve themselves and their households in taking responsibility for meeting our electricity challenges.

The decisions we make today will have a tremendous impact on the future those children will inherit, and that future is already beginning to look brighter. Innovative steps like smart meters and net metering are being used in our province. Net metering is already an option in some Ontario communities. Milton Hydro is pressing ahead with its own smart metering project. Our plan will see pockets of innovation like these expand across the province in a few short years, allowing more Ontarians to see real savings. But the benefits of a culture of conservation go beyond what people will see on monthly bills. A culture of conservation will help Ontario build a high-skills, high-tech, high-performance economy by rewarding and encouraging innovation, and this, in turn, will help stimulate investment, create jobs and build a stronger, more sustainable economy—an economy we can all be proud of.

There can be no doubt that Ontario faces a real challenge in meeting its energy needs, but our government is seizing the opportunity to promote a genuine conservation culture in communities, businesses and homes. We'll also engage local distribution companies, the private sector and community organizations. Together we can make Ontario a leader in energy efficiency. Together we can help create more jobs in an innovative economy, ensure stronger communities and provide cleaner air to breathe. A culture of conservation will ensure that Ontario has an electricity supply that is the envy of our competitors and a magnet for our investors.

I'm talking about an Ontario where consumers have both the stability they want and the reliability they demand and deserve; an Ontario where the energy that comes through the wires stimulates the energy that makes us great, the energy that stimulates our growth as an economy and society. I'm talking about the innovation of our businesses, the success of our schools, the compassion that marks our health care system and the cleanliness of the air we breathe and the water we drink. I'm talking about an Ontario with a standard of living and a quality of life that are second to none, and that Ontario is ours to deliver.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's my privilege to rise in the House today to recognize National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week, running from April 18 through April 24. Throughout the week, people and organizations here in Ontario and across the country are joining together to promote awareness of the great need for organ and tissue donation. They're launching a massive appeal for people to sign their organ and tissue donor cards and talk to their loved ones about their wishes.

One of the most profound gifts we can bring to one another is the gift of life. Last year, some 399 organ donors made it possible for doctors in Ontario to perform 693 organ transplants. These compassionate donors gave hundreds of Ontarians a new chance at life, and those transplants have a much higher success rate today, thanks to new technological and pharmaceutical breakthroughs.

As our population ages, more and more Ontarians will need life-saving organ transplants. These people will be our neighbours, our family members, our constituents, our friends and very likely someone in this Legislature today. I'm troubled that despite this urgent need, the donor rate has stalled in every province, including Ontario, for the past decade. Today, more than 1,700 Ontarians desperately need a transplant. Many of them will receive the organs they need, but others will die waiting for the right donor. We have a responsibility to prevent that from happening, and the power to do so is to be found amongst all of us.

Myths and misconceptions about organ and tissue donation are keeping people from signing their donor cards or considering living organ donation. A recent survey showed that 30% of Ontarians believe that age is a barrier for organ and tissue donation. We need to get the message out that Ontarians can donate no matter how old they are.

National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week is an opportunity to bust these myths and spread the facts about organ and tissue donation. For inspiration we need look no further than to one of my health care heroes: Kristopher Knowles, a sweet, spirited, courageous grade 8 student from Sarnia who badly needs a liver. Kristopher has taken a year off school to promote organ donation in Canada, and he just reached the 100th day of

his 353-day cross-Canada journey to inspire people to become organ and tissue donors.

Today, I'm urging everyone to get behind Kristopher to raise awareness of the benefits of organ and tissue donation, to let people know that donations save lives and bring hope to many hundreds of Canadians of all ages and to their families each and every year.

I want to acknowledge the critical work of the Trillium Gift of Life Network, Ontario's central organ and tissue donation agency. The network is helping to drive public awareness about organ and tissue donation and is leading innovative programs to encourage education about donation in workplaces and in communities. Last week I had the opportunity to attend, with the Toronto Automobile Dealers Association, Toronto fire and the York region police department—just one example of workplace campaigns.

To assist the Trillium Gift of Life Network with its important work, our government will be replacing the network's outdated information system. This new system will help to ensure that people receive the right organs and tissues at the very right time. Our government wants to ensure that all people who need a transplant will have a chance at life. Our government has just approved a program to support living kidney donation in transplant hospitals. Living donation is donating a kidney or part of a liver to a relative or friend, and it has become a growing source of transplants over the last four years.

All of us in this House have the opportunity to champion organ and tissue donation in our communities and to bring the message to people in different languages and different communities and different religious faiths. Like so many things, I truly believe that change will come from young people. We must shape the thinking of a new generation.

It's my honour to announce that the Trillium Gift of Life Network is creating a Reaching Youth Council and that Kristopher Knowles has agreed to act as council chair. This council will lead a province-wide effort to promote organ and tissue donation awareness to Ontario youth in our schools.

I urge everyone here today to sign an organ and tissue donor card. This is something each and every one of us can do. I urge you to talk to your family members about your wishes. Don't wait. Do it today, and you might just have the chance of saving someone's life—someone like Kristopher Knowles.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): In response for the opposition, I would say that we agree with Jack Gibbons from the Ontario Clean Air Alliance. We agree with the most recently issued report by the IMO—Dave Goulding—which outlines that the real problem is being caused by your hasty decision.

In fact, this isn't a campaign to have a culture of conservation; it's a culture of confusion. If you look at

most of the supply-side issues, you really have created the problem.

If I read the IMO report, "Ontario's electricity system faces ... challenges over the next 10 years. The uncertainty surrounding the return to service of Pickering A nuclear ... the lack of new generation investment and the commitment to shut down 7,500 megawatts of coal-fired generation by 2007 all contribute to a potentially severe shortfall."

We all know, Premier, that when you have a shortage of supply, the replacement energy is going to have to come from outside of Ontario. You know that just south-west of Ontario is Ohio, and in Ohio and other parts there are over 200 coal-fired generating stations that are quite willing and able to transmit power to the province of Ontario.

1410

What I haven't been impressed with is your slow response to indicate what your theory is, what your policy is with respect to demand management issues. We talked about interval meters and time-of-rate meters—and you know that your plan to intervene in that area is quite unremarkable. Are you going to incent consumers—individuals on fixed incomes and small businesses—by encouraging the retail sector to give them a smart meter to allow them to manage load? I spoke earlier today about agriculture. How could a dairy farmer in Ontario shift demand to those off-peak times that you talked about? The cows have to be milked, and you're putting them out of business.

Quite honestly, the Premier really has moved very slowly and inconclusively to set about a very important policy discussion. If you want to look at the history, when we were in government we had set up the alternative fuels committee—you should look at that report. We set up the generation conservation task force; their report was filed to you in December. We're the ones who initiated the Energy Star program, which rebated people on the retail sales tax.

You talked earlier about having some sort of control in the consumers' hands. It sounds to me like the smart meter should be given to your Minister of Energy so he can monitor his own behaviour on this file. What you've really outlined today is sort of like a clap-on/clap-off. This is what the people are supposed to do: turn off the hockey game and turn up the meter, because you're going to be paying more for electricity.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): It is my privilege to rise in the House today to respond to the statement from the minister recognizing National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week. This is one issue that affects each one of us here in this House and everybody within the province of Ontario. This is a week where we need to really focus and emphasize the need to talk to our families and friends about organ donation. I would encourage everyone to share their wishes with

their families regarding organ donations because we do have the opportunity as individuals in the province of Ontario to make the donation of an organ or tissue in order that we can improve the quality of life for another human being or, in some cases—many cases—to give someone that second chance at life itself.

We know that the need for organ and tissue donation continues to be there. Regrettably, we haven't seen much change in this province or in Canada. As of December 2003, there were 1,775 patients awaiting organ transplants. That included heart, kidney, lung and pancreas transplants. Despite past efforts across this country, we in Canada continue to fall short of organ donation as is seen in other countries throughout the world.

If you will recall, in 2000 our government recognized the significance of organ donation. We launched a similar awareness campaign. We were looking to issue a challenge to double Ontario's organ donation rate by 2005, and we did see an increase in organ donations. At that time, we also committed to increasing the funding for organ and tissue donation and transplantation to over \$120 million by 2005, yet more needs to be done.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I listened intently to what I believe was an attempt to announce an energy efficiency and energy conservation strategy, and I want to make the following response.

First of all, I want to remind the Premier that in 1992, the government of the day brought forward an aggressive energy efficiency strategy, and the then Liberal energy critic from Ottawa South, Mr McGuinty, said he was opposed to it because he said Ontario couldn't afford an energy efficiency strategy.

I wonder where we would be today if the Liberals had supported the government of the day and we had implemented all of those energy-efficient fridges and all of those energy efficiency measures. The Premier should remember that.

The Premier should also remember that when the Conservatives brought forward their strategy to privatize Ontario's hydroelectricity system, part and parcel of that was to do away with all of the energy efficiency strategies that were then in place. Why? We know why: because private sector companies that are more interested in selling than conserving wanted all of those energy efficiency strategies done away with. The Premier should remember that he and every Liberal in the House voted with the Conservatives, not only on the privatization, but to get rid of the energy efficiency strategies which today he wants to promote.

I see a lot of public relations here, I see a lot of spin, but I looked very carefully for the substance. The reality is this: For most of us in our homes, we can't turn off our refrigerator. If you turn off the refrigerator, you can't eat the food. Similarly, if you have an electric water heater, you can't turn it off. If you turn it off, you don't have hot water, and similarly with a number of other appliances. So I was looking for something from the government

which indicated that they are prepared to put forward money, incentives, so that people who have an old refrigerator, one that uses too much electricity, can afford to buy a new energy-efficient refrigerator, can save electricity, can save on their hydro bill, and perhaps over three or four years can pay back the loan. Did I see such an incentive strategy? No, Speaker; none.

In his remarks, the Premier talks about how people should have an energy audit of their home. Well, part of what he was opposed to in 1992 and 1993 was the green community strategy, which provided funding so that people could actually get an audit of their home; they could have experts come in and look at how much electricity they were using and provide them with some ideas and some incentives on how they could reduce their electricity consumption and save money. The Premier then was opposed to that.

The government wants to place a lot of emphasis on so-called smart meters. They say that by using smart meters, you can in effect lower the on-peak consumption, and he cites California. I just want him to know the results from California. California thought that by bringing in so-called smart meters, they could reduce electricity consumption by 500 megawatts. In fact, they were only able to reduce electricity consumption by 31 megawatts. The reason is that people can't turn off the fridge; they can't turn off many of these electrical appliances that they have to have every day to keep their food safe.

This is a PR announcement, but it's terribly lacking in substance that will lead to real electricity efficiency in the province.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats join in organ and tissue donation awareness. We salute advocates like Kristopher Knowles and George Marcello, and we say that it is time for this province to take a bold step forward. We need legislation in this province that makes it clear there is no property interest in the organs of a deceased person. It has to be an opt-out system rather than an opt-in system. There are methods available through the opt-out system. There are people whose faith dictates that they cannot donate organs or whose own ethical and moral standards can be accommodated.

If we're going to be serious about organ donation, let's make sure that organs of deceased persons are available across the board.

1420

VOLUNTEERS

BÉNÉVOLES

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent that each party will be able to speak for five minutes on National Volunteer Week.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Today marks the start of National Volunteer Week, which runs until this Saturday, April 24. National Volunteer Week is a time when we acknowledge those who have made a positive impact in our communities. It is also a time to reflect on the commitment and conviction of the volunteers who have not only contributed their time and effort, but who have a vision of a stronger and more caring Ontario.

The McGuinty government is about strengthening our great province. If all of us gave just an hour of our time once a week, imagine the possibilities. Each year in Ontario, 2.3 million people volunteer their time and expertise in strengthening our neighbourhoods and communities. Together they contribute more than 390 million hours of volunteer time. This represents more than \$6 billion to our economy.

Volunteers make vital contributions to virtually every aspect of Canadian society. This includes the areas of education, social services, the arts, recreation and much more. I am reminded of the quote that, "The true meaning of life is to plant trees under whose shade you do not expect to sit." This epitomizes how volunteers give of themselves without expecting any personal gain in return. It can be as simple as taking time out on a Saturday afternoon to coach a Little League team, sorting food at a local food bank, or spending time with a senior living on their own.

In my hometown of Hamilton, hundreds of people volunteer every day, like James McBride, who each year helps 150 low-income earners prepare their tax returns for free.

There's Betty Robinson, who volunteers every day with the cancer assistance programs in Hamilton. She picks up and drops off cancer patients for treatment. She also coordinates the annual Run for Cancer fundraiser event. Betty Robinson is 82 years old.

Our government recently recognized 12-year-old Ryan Hreljac from Kemptville, Ontario. He started volunteering when he was six, when he heard about the plight of people in Third World countries who didn't have safe drinking water. Since then, he has set up a foundation and raised funds to bring clean water to other countries, making a huge impact. Ryan was recently named to the Order of Ontario, along with 24 other dedicated individuals who gave of their time.

In the old city of Vanier, residents at le Centre d'accueil Champlain have benefited from the tireless efforts of volunteer Marie Rose Pelletier. The generosity of this volunteer par excellence knows no bounds. Her dedication and enthusiasm, combined with great attention to detail, help brighten up the days for the centre's residents. Marie Rose Pelletier truly makes a difference.

These are just a few of the thousands of examples of how volunteers are around us every day.

Recently I attended an event at the Royal Ontario Museum, just a stone's throw from the Legislature. I

learned how the ROM relies on the dedication of its volunteers. The ROM estimates that volunteers contribute about 86,000 hours in support of the museum. This translates to an economic contribution of more than \$1.8 million annually. This is typical of many great community organizations. They have the power to mobilize hundreds of volunteers who can be counted upon.

This morning I had the pleasure of helping out at a very important local program in Hamilton. I was delighted to volunteer for the North Hamilton Community Health Centre's children's breakfast club at St Luke's parish hall. This program has operated for the past eight years and serves breakfast to an average of 60 children every day. I was thrilled to learn that many of the high school students who volunteer with this program used to benefit from the breakfast club themselves. They are giving back to their communities because they know first-hand how important it is.

As part of National Volunteer Week, I will also attend a volunteer recognition event tonight sponsored by Volunteer Hamilton, and I know we are all attending similar events across the province. It is a wonderful way to acknowledge those who have made a difference and serves to encourage others to give back.

I'm proud to say that the Ontario government supports several initiatives to promote volunteer action across the province. Such initiatives include the Volunteer Service Awards and the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers. I strongly encourage our citizens to look at opportunities in their local communities to see how they can help improve the quality of life for others. I know that many of my colleagues on both sides of the House contribute their time and donate to several worthwhile causes. This does indeed make a difference, and I hope that others in your community are encouraged to do the same.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I want to begin my remarks by expressing appreciation to the Minister of Citizenship for her fine remarks and to say that I'm very glad we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to volunteers through National Volunteer Week.

I will begin by saying thank you to volunteers who coach minor sports, fundraise to feed and clothe people in need, give time to care for seniors, and so many other activities. Their contribution is valuable by its definition, because volunteers' talents are given into service by their own free will and, in doing so, they form the social fabric of our communities throughout the province.

Volunteers have shaped our way of life. I'm reminded of this fact when I think of volunteers who served in Canada's armed forces during the major wars of the last century and especially as we approach the 60th anniversary, on June 6, of D-Day, the Allied invasion of Nazi-occupied France. We should always remember that they paid dearly to leave us with a peaceful society where we are free to give and serve. The organization Volunteer Canada says that National Volunteer Week was first proclaimed in 1943 to make the public aware of the vital contribution made by women to the war effort.

We can only do justice to the tradition of volunteering by guaranteeing its future through the young people of

Ontario. For example, we can continue to support the minimum 40 hours of community involvement for high school students. Through volunteering, we know that young people develop the skills they need, an understanding of civic responsibility, and they learn that they can make a difference through their actions.

Planting the seeds of volunteerism is a two-way street, because youth and children need guidance, help and positive role models in life. My own experience as a Big Brother, when I had a little brother from 1987 to 1990, when he turned 17 and the program officially ended, was a deeply meaningful experience that continues to guide my perspective. I had a chance to be a friend and mentor to a young man as he grew up, and I'll never forget the experience. Big Brothers continues to be part of my life. I'm glad to serve as an honorary member of the board of the North Wellington Big Brothers.

Volunteering, mentoring and working to improve the future for young people is an important focus for me. That is why I strongly support Ontario's Promise, an initiative launched by former Premier Mike Harris and minister for children Margaret Marland.

Ontario's Promise brings together business, non-profit agencies, community leaders, parents and individuals to make and keep five promises to Ontario's young people. The five promises are: (1) a healthy start for all children; (2) an ongoing relationship with a caring adult; (3) a safe place with structured activities during non-school hours; (4) marketable skills through effective education; and (5) giving back through community service.

I liken Ontario's Promise to John F. Kennedy's Peace Corps idea. It has the potential to light the fire of idealism and spirit of service throughout an entire generation. I ask MPPs to forgo partisan politics where Ontario's Promise is concerned and support this program as a strong partnership for children and youth.

Over the years as an MPP, I have also supported volunteer firefighters in a number of ways. In my riding, and in the vast majority of rural communities, we are indebted to volunteer firefighters. They protect our homes, businesses, farms, cottages, schools, hospitals and all manner of buildings from fire, and they are often the first on the scene at car accidents and other emergencies. The skills they develop are essential where they volunteer and wherever they serve. Those skills are highly valuable in a monetary sense. There is no way that small communities could afford fire departments without volunteer firefighters. Without them, property taxes would be prohibitive, with opportunities for home ownership, businesses and jobs lost or taken away.

I want to remind all members of how important volunteer firefighters are, even to those members who represent cities, and hope you will understand how they benefit the whole province through their service to rural Ontario.

The Wellington Advertiser, one of our local newspapers in my riding, also deserves recognition for their story about National Volunteer Week that appeared in last Friday's paper. Here is how they described oppor-

tunities to volunteer: "In Wellington county there are numerous opportunities for individuals of all ages to get involved, from participating in environmental cleanups with Greenspaces for Wellington to acting as a prospective role model in the life of a young boy or girl through Big Brothers or Big Sisters, or as a volunteer driver, childcare assistant or special events volunteer" with the community resource centres of our riding.

I join them in asking people who are interested to step forward and volunteer. Your services are needed. As stated in the article, "Volunteers are not paid; not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless."

I had the pleasure of attending the Centre Wellington Chamber of Commerce's recent dinner, where they paid tribute to Roberta and Rienk Vlietstra of Fergus. One of our local papers said the following about them, and I quote, "For, like other involved volunteers everywhere, the Vlietstras are significant contributors to their community."

The same could be said of all of our volunteers, and for this we express our thanks.

1430

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): New Democrats support the statement made by the Minister of Citizenship and say that we're happy to support National Volunteer Week. We honour all those men and women, young and old, who put in a great deal of their time at the service of creating a decent and civil society. We argue that our democracy would be seriously diminished if we didn't have the level of volunteerism that we do. We note that more and more people are putting in a great deal of time, spending billions of hours of their time in volunteer work. We are worried about that, I must admit. We're happy they're doing it and worried at the same time—worried because we think they ought not to replace the obligations of government, and we're seeing more and more that volunteers are doing just that.

We have a number of examples to show that when governments shirk their responsibilities, volunteers are left to fill in the gaps. If you look at the elementary and secondary levels, parents are raising \$36 million for essential supplies. That's wrong. They ought not to be doing that. Money should be flowing from the Minister of Education down to school boards so parents do not have to do that, because rich parents can raise the money, no problem, and poor parents cannot. So you create an uneven level of support in those schools. It's wrong. When you look at how many out-of-the-cold programs we have in this society, they are growing, programs run by volunteers and volunteer organizations that are helping to feed and house the homeless. My question is, what is the obligation of government? We know what volunteers are doing and we praise them, but we are nervous about how governments are putting less and less of their resources to deal with that very problem.

If you look at the fact that there are more and more people in shelters, record numbers, and in some cases they're so full that people have to be run out of their shelters because there is no room, my question is, we

know what volunteers are doing, but what is the obligation of government?

If you look at our nursing homes, we have more and more volunteers filling in because we are giving less and less for staffing.

On April 23 the mayor is calling a litter pickup day, calling on all citizens to pick up litter. Why? Because we have fewer and fewer people doing the job of cleaning our streets.

My worry is this: If this government refuses to consider progressive income taxes on individuals who are earning more than \$100,000, it will mean more and more unfair user fees, and we will need more and more volunteers to fill in the gap for the absence of a strong government and a strong role for government. That's my worry.

In the meantime, we thank all of those volunteers very much for the work they're putting in to make our society more civil.

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): Monsieur le Président, le caucus NPD veut remercier les bénévoles pour leur ouvrage. Nous avons l'opportunité cette semaine de déclarer notre support pour tout l'ouvrage qui est fait dans nos communautés, de nous assurer que nos communautés sont vivantes et que ces communautés-là sont capables de fonctionner. Mais comme a dit mon bon collègue M. Marchese, le problème est que l'on se fie moins à l'État et de plus en plus aux volontaires. Ça commence à être un problème parce que, si on regarde les services dans nos communautés—les hôpitaux, les services municipaux—ces services se font de plus en plus par des volontaires. Il faut se demander à quel point c'est l'obligation de l'État et à quel point c'est l'obligation des volontaires.

On sait que le gouvernement conservateur provincial et le gouvernement libéral fédéral ont beaucoup transféré et ont beaucoup diminué le financement des programmes. À cause de cela, on voit que beaucoup de ces agences, comme les hôpitaux et les écoles, ont besoin d'aller demander aux volontaires de reprendre la capacité de donner certains services qui dans le passé avaient été payés par l'État. Oui, c'est important d'avoir des volontaires, mais on ne devrait pas toujours avoir à se fier à ces volontaires pour s'assurer que les obligations de l'État sont faites.

Donc, de la part des néo-démocrates on veut dire que oui, les volontaires sont importants, oui, on a besoin de les soutenir, oui, on les félicite pour l'ouvrage qu'ils font, mais l'État a sa responsabilité, et à la fin de la journée on demande que ce gouvernement et cette Assemblée s'assurent que nos programmes sont adéquatement financés pour que ces programmes-là soient là pour le futur.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to beg the indulgence of the House to announce that May 18, 2004, will be the date on which the budget is presented to the people of Ontario in this place, in the Legislature of Ontario.

QUESTION PERIOD

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wanted to raise this with you prior to question period beginning. I want to say at the outset that the official opposition, I think, has been quite pleased with respect to the number of questions that you've been able to manage in terms of the operations of the business of the House since it opened for the spring session. However, Mr Speaker, I think there was a clear breach of parliamentary convention this past Thursday with respect to the demonstrations on the part of the government side of the House, in terms of delaying question period for extended periods of time, and also the responses from ministers to lob-ball questions from back-bench members.

I would make a request of you to give guidance to members with respect to the time that you will expect from the chair in terms of questions and answers, and give some parameters around the times, as well as curtailing the demonstrations on the government side of the House.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Let me thank the member for his observation. I will look at it very closely as question period goes on. But I would ask for co-operation from all so we can proceed in a very effective way.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): If I may, Mr Speaker, to that same point of order: I noticed that as well, as did my colleagues. We found it regrettable. But you see, that's what happens when you change the rules to strangle the role of the opposition parties here in the Legislature. I would say to the House leader for the official opposition that you make your bed, you lie in it. And I would say to the government that they've been in that position of being frustrated about not being able to exercise the role of opposition and I trust that they would pay heed to that history when it comes time for them to use their majority government power to do any further rule changes.

The Speaker: Thank you very much. The point of order has been raised. I'm sure that we know the rules and we ask you to adhere to them.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition): Mr Premier, will you now admit that your guesstimated figure of \$500 million in savings by cancelling the equity in education tax credit was just a made up number and is nowhere near the actual number?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): First of all, I want to remind the leader of the official opposition that he originally opposed the private school tax credit. We have every confidence in our numbers, but I tell you that when all is

said and done, this is an important matter of principle for us. If I have one extra dollar available and I have the choice as to whether I'm going to put it into a private school or a public school, I want the people of Ontario to know that this Liberal government will put that money into public education.

Mr Eves: First of all, the Premier knows very well that no dollars went to any private school in Ontario. Where they did go was to parents of children of middle- and modest-income families who chose to send their children, for one reason or another, to an independent school of their choice.

You were quoted on September 2 of last year as saying that this was going to save \$500 million a year that would go into the public school system. Your campaign platform said it would save \$425 million a year. In fact, the actual number for last year, 2002, was \$29 million, and the number in the budget for 2003 was no more than \$60 million. Will you now admit that this is just hocus-pocus, that it's a number you made up, along with a whole pile of other numbers, I might add, to make it look good?

1440

Hon Mr McGuinty: Here's another number of which we are very proud: We put \$112 million into public education recently to help our most needy children. That was specifically geared toward needy children, some of our most vulnerable, who are having special learning challenges. We are very proud of that investment.

Again, I say to the leader of the official opposition, this is a matter of very important principle for us. It's also a matter upon which the people of Ontario can notice a very distinct contrast. They want to take public dollars and put them into private schools; we want to take every public dollar that is available to us and put that money into public education.

Mr Eves: The Premier knows very well that their platform talked about increasing public education funding by \$1.6 billion. We had a platform to \$1.9 billion, \$840 million of which was delivered within 48 hours of Dr Rozanski's report. So to stand there and babble on about \$116 million, which pales in comparison, is stretching the truth, shall we say, to say the least.

There are at least 20 campaign promises that you've broken to date. Now will you at least come clean with the people of Ontario about the McGuinty—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. The leader of the official opposition used a couple of unparliamentary words. I'd prefer if you'd withdraw them, please.

Mr Eves: If I've said anything that offends the Speaker, I happily withdraw it.

Hon Mr McGuinty: The original question had to do with public education. I want to return to that theme because, again, I think it's a very important matter of principle to us. The Leader of the Opposition made reference to their investments in public schools. But what we have learned as a result of getting into schools and

speaking with parents, teachers and trustees is that we have a public education system that is struggling, at best.

We intend to do everything that we possibly can, notwithstanding the severe fiscal constraints which we find ourselves having to cope with, to show that this government and the people of Ontario are committed to public education. We understand that, at the end of the day, public education at its very best will give us the best workers, who will get the best jobs and earn the highest pay. But more than that, it will give us the best citizens, people who will take responsibility for their communities. That's why we're so strongly in favour of public education.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): My question is for the Minister of Finance. The promise that was made by your party during the last election was to enact reforms that would reduce automobile insurance rates by an average of 10%. That was an unqualified promise to the people of Ontario made during the election campaign. You made a statement in the House here the other day with respect to that. I think people listening to that and reading about it would reasonably infer that you actually mean that people in Ontario who own cars can expect to see an average reduction of 10% in their premiums this year compared to last year. Is that what you want people to believe?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): What we need the people of Ontario to believe, because it is the truth, is that for three years before we came to power automobile insurance rates were going on one trajectory only: up like this; over the course of three years, 43%.

As a result of the initiatives that we took on the day we were sworn in, we have begun to set a trend that has auto premiums going down in this direction, 10% over what they would otherwise have been as of April 15th.

Mr Flaherty: But you said in the House on Thursday, "That report shows an average rate reduction of 10.15%." Now people in Ontario listening to that, quite rightly I would think, would say, "Well, the Liberals are fulfilling their promise to reduce auto insurance premiums by 10%; that is, that I will pay 10% less this year compared to last year."

But when people open their automobile renewals this year and they see their premium, you know that that's not true. They are not going to see that, because what it is is 10% of the rate asked by the insurers, of the rate need by the insurers, not last year's rate compared to this year's rate. So, for example, some of the largest insurers in fact will only be reducing their premiums 2% or 3%. Come clean with people who drive cars in Ontario: You are not reducing their premiums by 10%.

Hon Mr Sorbara: I have a great deal of respect for the member from Whitby-Ajax. He is a former Minister of Finance. During his period as Minister of Finance, insurance rates went up and up and up, and during the period of his predecessor and during the period of his

successor, insurance rates for private automobiles in this province went in one direction only: up. We made a campaign commitment to take steps to start to reduce premiums. We took those steps. As of April 15, the filings are in place, which will bring down rates by, on average, 10%.

Mr Flaherty: Not only is the Liberal Party not keeping the promise they made in their campaign document of a 10% reduction from last year to this year, this minister can't even keep the promise he made last Thursday, which was the 10.15% in rates from last year to this year. But, this is not coming clean with the people of Ontario, especially the people of Ontario who have the greatest need: those in the Facility Association. You know, Minister, the Facility Association's loss for last year was about \$400 million; it's a 29% increase.

Stand in your place and tell me that people who can't get insurance with insurance companies in this province—it's a mandatory product; they have to have it to drive their cars—and that the thousands and thousands of drivers put into the Facility Association are going to see, on average, a 10% reduction in their premiums this year compared to last year. Stand up and say that.

Hon Mr Sorbara: Once again, my friend from Whitby-Ajax has to take credit for an unprecedented rise in insurance rates during his time in office.

Now, I'll answer his question quite directly. Those who are put into the Facility because of bad driving habits and bad driving records will not see that reduction. We have specifically excluded that class of drivers. But under the old regime, far too many drivers were relegated to the Facility. That is going to change. We have now finished part one of our reform. Part two and part three are about to come. I want to tell a former finance minister that insurance premiums started to go down the day his government was defeated and our government was elected.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question?

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. It's also about your promise to reduce auto insurance rates by 20%, because drivers all across Ontario, as they open their insurance notices, are getting a nasty, nasty surprise. In almost every case, it's a double-digit increase. That means people aren't saving money on their insurance; they're having to raid their wallets even more to pay the insurance bill.

Premier, admit it: Your much-announced scheme to reduce auto insurance rates is a con game, a scam, and you've broken your promise once again.

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the Minister of Finance, Speaker.

Hon Mr Sorbara: We have very good news for the people of Ontario. As they begin to renew their automobile insurance policies, for the first time in four years they will see a moderation in rates in this province.

I want to tell my friend the leader of the New Democrats that we made a commitment during the campaign to begin the process on the day we were elected. We did

that. We are now starting to see the benefits, but our work has not yet ended. We will continue, and we will have the strongest, most competitive insurance system in the entire country, right here in the province of Ontario.

1450

Mr Hampton: So now it's not a rate reduction, it's a rate moderation.

I want to read to the Premier what you promised in the election, from the Liberal campaign book: "The Ontario Liberals believe that people who must have insurance to drive want to see their rates come down, not just rise more slowly." You didn't promise a moderation. You promised rates would come down.

Let me tell you about James Harman from Timmins. Without any convictions or at-fault accidents, nothing over the last year, his premiums have doubled—from \$2,819 to \$5,328 this year. No accidents, no claims, nothing, but his insurance rates have doubled. Is this what the Premier meant when he said he was going to cut rates by 20%?

Hon Mr Sorbara: The commitment during the campaign was to take steps which ultimately would bring rates down by, on average, 20%, and to do it in two steps, the first step just now completed.

When we took office, insurance premiums were at an historic high in this province. Those are the rates that we inherited. On the very first day in power, we took steps to freeze rates and to begin a process of reform of the system. The completion of that part of the reform has now begun, and 55% of the market has now reported. Those reports show a rate reduction of 10.15%, exactly what we committed to in the campaign, delivered within six months.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Premier: OCUFA, which is the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, has just produced a very interesting report. It says that, beginning in 1995, user fees, copayment fees and administrative fees implemented by the former Conservative government took almost \$1,000 a year out of the pockets of lower- and modest-income Ontarians. They say that the Conservative approach of raising copayment fees and administrative fees cost people a lot of money, and in fact it hurt those with fixed incomes the most.

Your government now is considering doing exactly the same thing with the seniors' drug benefit program. Your own pre-budget consultation document says so. If you know that this was so unfair under the Conservatives, why is your own government thinking of doing it?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I appreciate the question from the leader of the NDP so that I can make it clear as to the direction that we are pursuing as the government. We understand full well the thrust of that report and agree very much with it. We agree that the vulnerable and our middle class in particular find themselves in a position

where they are worse off than originally. That's why, I say to the member opposite, we're proud to say that we have increased the minimum wage already. We have taken steps to freeze tuition in the province. We have cancelled giveaways to private schools and large corporations. We're getting back into the business of public housing in Ontario. We are assuming our responsibility when it comes to helping out our most needy and most vulnerable.

Mr Hampton: Premier, you know how unfair the Conservative agenda was, that it hit those on fixed incomes, lower and modest incomes the most, that it hurt them the most. Yet here we have the Ontario prescription drug benefit program and you're thinking about going after all kinds of seniors. You're going after the wrong people. You couldn't have it more wrong.

Premier, those individuals with \$100,000-a-year incomes got a 35% tax cut from the Conservatives. Imagine that. Those people who are in the top five got a 35% tax cut, yet you're not going to touch them. You're going to go after seniors living on fixed incomes.

I'll give you another chance, Premier. Stand up today and tell seniors across Ontario that you're not going to go after the prescription drug benefit program, you're not going to hit them with another round of fees.

Hon Mr McGuinty: Well, Speaker, if the member opposite has seen a copy of the budget—he seems to speak with tremendous authority about what we are about to do—I would be delighted if he would share that with us.

In the words of that immortal political philosopher Dr Phil, the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. This is what we've done so far: We've increased the minimum wage, we've cancelled corporate tax cuts, we've cancelled sending half a million dollars into private schools, we're working hard to get rid of the 60-hour workweek, we're providing emergency medical leave to our families and the like. That is the direction we are pursuing, that is the direction we will continue to pursue and that will be well reflected in our very first budget.

FABRY DISEASE

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, today you also have a chance to be a health care hero. About three weeks ago, I asked you to respond to the letters and desperate pleas for help from Fabry patients, their families and friends. You promised to look into it. Regrettably, there has been no response.

In the gallery today is John Strauss. He has asked you for help. In fact, today he and his wife, Donna, have brought 32 more letters asking you for help.

As you know, on April 25 the compassionate supply of Fabrazyme ends for him and four other patients in Ontario. Without this treatment, people such as John will face premature death or strokes. Will you commit today to ensure the continuation of Fabrazyme on com-

passionate grounds until such time as a final decision on approval is made?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I would like to thank the member for her question. In fact, other members have been in touch with me on this issue as well. I recognize it is a time-sensitive matter. I do not have a resolution to announce to the House today, but I can assure the member, the gentleman in the gallery and any others struggling with this challenge that the government of Ontario is working aggressively on this file with a view toward a resolution that will be positive for those patients who are seeing benefits from this product.

So although I am not in a position today to confirm exactly what those arrangements will be, I give that member every assurance that we're working on this as a priority. It has lots of direct involvement from staff in my office, and I am very hopeful of a resolution in very short order.

Mrs Witmer: I do want to remind the minister that there is a tremendous amount of anxiety for these five patients and for their families. I've had passionate pleas for help from children—daughters—who probably will also be candidates for Fabry disease. John, here today, who is from our community of Mannheim, is down to his last treatment. Bill Taylor, a patient in Ottawa, had his last treatment last week and is now desperately looking to be able to continue the Fabrazyme. I want to quote Bill, who pleads with you: "This is not a political issue. It's about my life and the lives of other patients." Minister, I hope you will help to save the lives of people like Bill and John, I hope you will follow the example of Alberta and I hope that today you could commit to helping these five people continue with Fabrazyme on compassionate grounds until the final decision for approval is made.

Hon Mr Smitherman: I cannot add much beyond what I said in my earlier response except to offer the strongest possible assurance to the member and to those suffering with this illness that their government is working aggressively with a view to responding to the call that is required. It's a challenging issue for a variety of reasons, but in the face of those challenges we are working aggressively and I'm very confident we will find a resolution that is up to the standard we all expect to deliver in Ontario.

1500

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): My question is for the minister responsible for seniors. My riding contains a very high percentage of seniors, probably one of the highest in the country. Currently Ontario has 1.5 million seniors. I guess I should also suggest that my seniors are very avid Toronto Maple Leafs fans. So may I say on their behalf, "Go, Leafs, go!"

By 2028, the number of senior citizens in Ontario is actually expected to double. The seniors in my riding and across Ontario can find it extremely difficult to under-

stand and access the services to which they are entitled. This lack of information leaves a very negative impact on their health, their community involvement and overall quality of life. Seniors and their families often have to go from office to office, building to building, to get the information they need. My question is, what is the minister responsible for seniors going to do to ensure that seniors have better access to the range of services that their hard work made possible?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I'd like to thank the member for a very pertinent question. We all agree that seniors deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, and deserve to understand and have easy access to all the various government programs that are out there, no matter what level of government. Our government is striving to make that happen, to make seniors understand the programs they're entitled to and the programs that are out there.

Let me just give you three examples of that. First of all, our Guide to Programs and Services for Seniors in Ontario is available on-line and in a number of different languages. As a matter of fact, over 100,000 copies of the on-line program guideline have already been distributed around the province to seniors and different senior organizations. Our seniors' info line is available toll-free and can answer questions in 20 different languages. Finally, just last fall we partnered with the government of Ontario to launch seniorsinfo.ca, a collaborative seniors' portal. This integrates senior information and services from all three levels of government and will make it easier for seniors to find the necessary services that they need.

Mrs Cansfield: We need to continue to work with Ontario senior groups, service providers and other levels of government and build on these initiatives to ensure that seniors, today and tomorrow, enjoy the very best quality of life. So I ask, what initiatives are underway that demonstrate our efforts to plan in a collaborative way for our aging population?

Hon Mr Gerretsen: Again, thanks to the member for the question. There are a number of initiatives that are ongoing. As we know, the senior population is going to rise tremendously over the next number of years, so it becomes ever more important. With the help of Ontario's major seniors' organizations, our government will develop a comprehensive approach to seniors' issues that will improve all services that affect them. Ontario's Alzheimer and elder abuse strategies are already in place and are good examples of the kind of working relationships that have developed between government and different organizations.

As a matter of fact, later on this June, federal and municipal colleagues will be joining provincial colleagues at a symposium entitled Breaking Down the Silos: Integrating Services for Seniors. It will be co-hosted by this province and the Canadian Seniors Partnership, a partnership that we co-chair, which was formed to explore and support innovative intergovernmental service-delivery opportunities to help our seniors.

TAXATION

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Premier: Mr Premier, you have brought forward a number of bizarre and violently unpopular policy ideas in your six months as Premier; to refresh your memory: tolls on Highway 69, mandatory retesting of all drivers in Ontario, and the retroactive taxation of trailer home owners. But your new 8% Dalton McGuinty meal tax takes the cake and then taxes it too.

You are being besieged by petitions from all across Ontario; today, from members of this caucus, the NDP and your own caucus. Will you do the right thing? Will you back down and cancel your plan to bring in this ill-conceived, bad idea that's going to tax people across Ontario? Mr Premier, just say no.

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): To the Minister of Finance, Speaker.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): The first thing I will do is correct the record of my friend from Erie-Lincoln apropos tolls on Highway 69: not going to happen. Apropos retroactive taxes on trailer parks, it was the policy of the previous government to do that. It was that policy which we changed and corrected. So that's now in place.

I know that my friend from Erie-Lincoln was elected to indulge in what the Minister of Tourism correctly describes as idle speculation about taxes. My responsibility, as I've announced today, is to bring forward a budget in this House on May 18 and to start in that budget to correct some of the damage done by the previous administration over the course of the past eight years.

Mr Hudak: The finance minister makes exactly the same point I did. You brought forward these trial balloons—like the tolling of Highway 69, the retesting of drivers across the province and retroactive taxation—and after letting them twist in the wind for weeks, you shoot them down. Mr Premier and Mr Finance Minister, you're twisting in the wind once again.

The Toronto Star compares your handling of this issue to Inspector Clouseau, in bringing forward this coalition. You answered my other questions and shot down three of the policy ideas. Why don't you have the courage to put your money where your mouth is? Answer yes or no: Are you going to back down on this ill-conceived new 8% McGuinty meal tax, yes or no?

Hon Mr Sorbara: You can almost feel the earth shake when my friend from Erie-Lincoln quotes, with support, the Toronto Star. This is a new era in Ontario politics.

I tell my friend from Erie-Lincoln that we'll present a budget in this Legislature on May 18 that will start to repair some of the economic, public service, public administration and fiscal damage that was done by the previous administration. We will fulfill our commitments in the area of education. We will fulfill our commitments in the area of health care. We will build stronger

communities in this province. We will do all of that, beginning with the presentation we make on May 18 in the budget in this Legislature.

LITERACY

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): My question is for the Minister of Education. I recently attended my MPP back-to-school day at Bishop Allen Academy and St Leo Catholic School, where I had an opportunity to speak to both students and teachers. Many of the students, teachers and parents in my riding are concerned about the literacy and numeracy failings in our high schools. Today's students are tomorrow's leaders and our province's most valuable resource, but many of them need our help. What is our government doing to help the many grade 10 students who have not been able to pass the literacy test?

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): There is an immediacy to the needs of students. They have not been responded to in this province for quite a number of years. We find not pockets, but large numbers, of students who are struggling with things that everybody in this House can empathize with: the basic ability to read and write.

For example, when the Toronto board learned that 10,000—10%—of their students in grades 1 to 5 are only reading at level one, we willingly got into a pilot project with them so that those students will receive, right away, intensive literacy support, 20 hours before the end of the school year. Also, they will have a summer camp program at the end of the school year to sustain those skills at the same time they're learning other things and how to socialize. Literacy and numeracy will be delivered by this government, and we're trying very hard to make up for the lack of effort by the one before.

Ms Broten: Many of the experts, the teachers who work day in and day out with our students, tell me that grade 10 is far too late. They tell me we need to focus our attention on the earlier grades to help kids catch up and excel sooner. Minister, what, if anything, is our government doing to address this long outstanding issue in order to better assist our youngest students?

Hon Mr Kennedy: The basic thrust here is that the earlier we reach kids, the better. We know that we need to have them come to school ready to learn and that, as much as possible, we can impart the skills and attitudes at an earlier age, but it has to be intentional. All around this province, our boards and schools and principals have been scrambling just to find the basic resources. What we have said is that we will be actually working with them, realistically partnering, to make sure these things get delivered, that this focus is part of what they can look forward to. One anxiety of families across this province, that their students will somehow get missed by the school programs that are out there, is becoming less and less a possibility, because we're now working with the Toronto board and boards all around the province to make sure that literacy and numeracy are the first order of the day.

1510

TAXATION

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Premier. The people of Ontario are not going to swallow your soup-and-sandwich tax. They're not going to take it. You've got a Tim Hortons revolution out there. If you go out to those little restaurants, if you go out to where people are eating and drinking coffee, they're not happy with what you're saying or what you're not saying.

They're angry because you're raising their bills for water, you're raising their bills for hydro, and you're not doing anything about auto insurance. Now you're taking dead aim at their \$3.99 breakfast. We're talking about ordinary people: seniors, students, cafeteria workers. We're talking about people in factories.

I want to put it very, very simply. I don't want a dance; I don't want vague answers. I just want the straight answer, and so do they, because they're talking about it everywhere. Are you going to institute this tax or are you not?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Minister of Finance.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I appreciate where my friend from Beaches-East York is coming from. We could spend every single question in question period going over the same territory. We'll take a tax, pretend that it's coming, and then demand that it not come.

All I can say to my friend from Beaches-East York is that we acknowledge the presence of a very powerful campaign, from McDonald's and Tim Hortons primarily, about the exemption on \$4 meals. All I can tell my friend is that it is the intention of this government to continue on its track record of doing the most for those who are most vulnerable in this province. We would never do anything that would hurt that constituency.

Mr Prue: The people now know what "choose change" means. It means that when they buy a \$3.99 breakfast and they give \$5, they don't get any change because you keep it. There are 380,000 people who work in the food industry, 380,000 people in the restaurants, and 158,000 of those are students who are trying to pay their way through schools and universities.

I'm worried because you're talking about not whacking the poor and the small people. Well, these are the same people who rely on those jobs, and we know that if you put in this tax, you're putting their jobs at risk. Can you assure them that their jobs will not be at risk, that you will not be putting in this new 8%, that they can be secure, and that they will have jobs to go forward to in the weeks and months ahead?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I can assure my friend that the budget that will be presented on May 18 will take very important steps to build a new foundation of strong economic growth right across the province of Ontario. That means employment opportunities for those who are

just coming into the workplace. That means economic growth that will create new jobs. That means that we'll be looking to the entire province, not just the greater Toronto area.

I want to say to my friend that I am surprised at the tenor of his question. It is scripted in exactly the words that representatives from Tim Hortons and McDonald's put to me about job loss when they came to see me two weeks ago. They threatened me by saying, "If you just say that you won't do it, then we won't have to mount the campaign." I can't indulge in that kind of negotiation. I tell my friend on the other side, and those at McDonald's and at Tim Hortons, that we'll have to wait for the budget.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. It relates to a report over the weekend—extremely well researched by the Toronto Star, I might say—that relates to a very serious safety issue that demands your attention. It speaks to the literally hundreds of bridges across this province that are in a serious state of disrepair in many cases—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Would you allow the member to state his question? More shouting is coming from the government side. The member for Oak Ridges.

Mr Klees: In response to appeals from municipalities across the province, the previous government had made a commitment to assume responsibility for those bridges and for their maintenance and inspection. I'd like to know whether that in fact is going to be your policy as well. Will you support municipalities across this province to deal with this important safety issue?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): Actually, I'm surprised to have this question from my colleague on the other side. He should remember that his government was the government that really downloaded the bridges on to municipalities, and they did so without a plan and without giving them any tools to address those needs. We are absolutely committed to working with the municipalities to work on these issues and give them the tools to address these kinds of concerns.

Mr Klees: Minister, regardless of what you are attempting to spin at this point, the reality is that we made a commitment to these municipalities to provide the funding. Will you stand in your place today and confirm that you will assume that same responsibility, or will you allow that first bridge to collapse under your watch and then attempt to spin your way out of that as well? Will you do the responsible thing today and assume responsibility and commit to a partnership with municipalities across this province on this important safety issue?

Hon Mr Takhar: It's really interesting that my colleague on the other side seems to have all the answers

to all the problems when, as the Minister of Transportation, he could not implement any of them. Now all of a sudden, he has a solution to every problem.

We are prepared to work with municipalities. We are prepared to give them a new deal so they can address their long-term issues. They downloaded the bridges on to municipalities without any plan or without giving any resources to the municipalities.

PRIMARY CARE REFORM

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. My constituency office has received dozens of calls from people in my riding who try desperately to find a family physician. As Ontario's population ages, the need for family physicians will continue to grow. What are your plans to improve access to primary care for the people of Ontario?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): While I recognize that the question comes from the hard-working member for Peterborough, it's a question, regrettably, that could be asked by pretty much any member in this House. The reality is that we're struggling in many parts of our province with access to a family doctor.

Our party has a plan. In the election campaign, we committed to 150 family health teams, which have the great advantage of being multidisciplinary, of offering Ontarians the opportunity to receive their care from teams of health professionals working together. What I can say to the honourable member is that the case is being well made in the community of Peterborough. I receive a lot of correspondence from there, and recently, because Peterborough is such an example of the challenges that we have, I'm pleased to say that this government appointed Mayor Sylvia Sutherland to the board of the College of Physicians and Surgeons so that she could be a strong voice there for communities like Peterborough that are struggling without enough access to family practitioners.

Mr Leal: In Peterborough, we've developed a very innovative, integrative primary care model proposal that would provide primary care for the 18,000 to 20,000 people who currently do not have a family physician. I know that we've had the opportunity to present this innovative model to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I want to ask the minister today, how will this plan effectively and positively help our citizens and perhaps be used as a template throughout Ontario?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The member makes an excellent point. Peterborough is demonstrating an extraordinarily strong act of local leadership on this issue. We've had the opportunity—my political staff, and staff from the ministry—to meet with representatives from the Peterborough community. While I'm not in a position today to say that Peterborough gets the go-forward, I am very clearly in a position to say that the proposal that has come forward from the Peterborough community is very

closely aligned with our family health team proposals. As a result of the hard work of the member from Peterborough, he can be absolutely certain that the people in his community are clearly on our radar screen. We like a lot of what they're doing and we hope to be able to give life to proposals like this one very soon.

1520

SCHOOLTEACHERS

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): My question is for the Minister of Education and relates to the qualifications of people teaching credit courses in our public schools. As you know, our government created the Ontario College of Teachers and gave it the responsibility of ensuring that people who teach courses in our public schools are qualified and certified by the Ontario College of Teachers. Is the minister aware of the number of persons teaching credit courses in our public schools who have not gone through the qualification and certification process with the Ontario College of Teachers?

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): As the member opposite may remember, there is a service that's provided through the ministry to acknowledge uncertified teachers as a last resort. There was last year, I believe, something in the order of 1,200. Those requests grow throughout the year. To the best of my knowledge, there are fewer than those at this time last year, but I will happily get back to the member and let him know what the number of those instructors is in the colleges.

I will say, though, about his previous advocacy of private schools, that about half of the instructors in private schools are acknowledged by the college and half are not.

Mr Flaherty: The mechanism is called "letters of permission," and I'm told there are about 2,000 of them extant in Ontario, now teaching credit courses in public school.

The point is this: We have this elaborate process in the Ontario College of Teachers which, I think the minister will agree, does a superb job vetting teachers, making sure we only have qualified, screened teachers teaching credit courses in public schools. We have this anomaly of 2,000 or so letters of permission that are over in the Ministry of Education. I'd suggest to the minister and ask him whether he'd be prepared to move the letters-of-permission function to the Ontario College of Teachers for this very good reason: It is only the college that has access to the database of these teachers in the 50 American states and across Canada so we can make sure we have certified, qualified teachers in our public school system.

Hon Mr Kennedy: I just want to say that what parents in this province want to see are motivated, well-trained teachers in front of their class, and what we've had in these last years is conflict and attacks from the people opposite. I have to give the member credit that he finally expresses some interest in the state of well-being of the public schools in this province. This is the first question we've ever had to that effect.

I will say as well that it is our commitment to make sure that we have the best-trained teachers in the province, people operating in a context of respect from this government and from the rest of society.

Finally, I will say that we will absolutely take under advisement the suggestion made by the member opposite and by others, because we are about strengthening an independent college of teachers, which the previous government turned into a battleground between themselves and teachers. Instead, it will be depoliticized and working on behalf of teaching standards, on behalf of students in this province, the way it should have been since its inception.

LAKEVIEW GENERATING STATION

Mr Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): I rise today to ask a question of the Minister of Energy. But before that, I'd like to thank him for making energy planning in Ontario a thorough, thoughtful and long-range process, not a knee-jerk reaction for political gain and the support of friends.

My question is the following: The Lakeview plant produces approximately 1,140 megawatts of electricity in my riding by burning coal. As everyone knows, coal-fired generating stations contribute terrible pollutants to the air we breathe and depend on. Can you assure us today that our government is serious about cleaning up our air and remains committed to closing this plant by May 2005?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I want to thank the member for Mississauga South for his question and re-emphasize that cleaner air is a top priority for our government. Lakeview accounts for 26% of the GTA region's SO₂ emissions and 8% of total NO_x emissions. As a result, Lakeview will be the first coal-fired station that we'll be closing. The station is required to cease burning coal by April 30, 2005. After that date, emissions from Lakeview cannot be greater than those from gas-fired generation.

This government is doing things differently. After very little progress on new supply initiatives by the Tories, we're already acting to address this issue by announcing RFPs for 2,500 megawatts of new capacity and/or demand-side management—the first time in Ontario's history there's been a call for that—and up to 300 megawatts of new renewable resources. I expect that call for proposals to be out this week. That's why we're changing the way business was done under the Tories and the NDP, and we're making an important difference to air quality in the province of Ontario.

Mr Peterson: Minister, thank you for your reassurance. This plant, although a significant polluter, is a major contributor to our local economy, as it employs many people, directly and indirectly. Not only has the government continued to improve health care and education, we are also committed to improving our environment and to economic growth and prosperity for all.

In light of the phasing out of plants such as Lakeview in my riding, what avenues are being considered that could mitigate any potential job loss with the closure of this plant?

Hon Mr Duncan: To the member of Mississauga South, in fact, Lakeview does employ about 200 people. The Ministry of Energy and Ontario Power Generation are looking very closely now at the employment impacts of shutting down Lakeview and the potential redeployment of employees within the electricity sector. It should be noted that as the generation of coal is replaced, significant investments will be required in alternative cleaner options, such as renewable gas-fired generation, the potential refurbishment of nuclear plants, and conservation and demand-side initiatives. As a result, a large fraction of OPG staff could potentially be redeployed to other business units within OPG or by other electricity generators within the industry.

As the electricity needs of the province are further assessed, additional new generation capacity or refurbishment of existing capacity will be required. This will provide further redeployment opportunities for the employees affected by the shutting down of the Lakeview station. Let me give the member opposite our assurances that we will make sure that the interests of your community and those employees are well protected with our plan.

CHILD CARE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): A question to the Premier: During the election you made an announcement with great fanfare at Withrow school's child care centre in my riding, pledging your support to regulated child care. Non-profit child care centres in Toronto, including Withrow, are about to make cuts and raise fees.

Theresa Radwanski is here with us today. She's the supervisor at the Children's Circle daycare. She says her centre will have to cut spaces because you are sitting on \$58 million in federal money that is supposed to go to child care. To make up for these cuts, she'll have to charge \$1,400 more per year for a family with two children.

Premier, will you release that federal money today? It's not your money, it's their money.

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The minister would like to speak to this, Speaker.

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I thank the member opposite for this question. Originally, when this question of federal money being sat on came up, I looked into it, I asked my ministry to look into it, and that is not case. There isn't any federal money that we are sitting on. In fact, for the first time in a decade, the money that the federal government did give for child care in this province was actually given for child care in this province.

We have a commitment to increase the accessibility to child care. We're moving very quickly in developing our plans. We are also going to improve the quality of child care in this province by regulating the profession, something that the early childhood educators wish.

Ms Churley: Minister, you should talk to the people who are running the child care centres, because that's not what they're going to tell you. You have that money and you haven't freed it up. The families in my riding and across Toronto don't have another \$1,400 in user fees for child care. Yet if you don't release this money—and you better look into this because it's sitting there, this \$58 million—to the city, that is what they'll have to pay. The city is finalizing its budget this week so they need the money now. If you don't free up this money, they will have to cut another 220 child care subsidy spaces on top of over 1,700 lost over the past two years.

I want to ask you very specifically, Minister: Why are you hiding this \$58 million that came from the federal government for the daycares in this province? What are you up to? Will you release that money today?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: I'm surprised at the tone of that question. I actually did look into this situation, and there is no money being hidden anywhere. In fact, this government gives \$700 million a year to child care. We are also, for the first time in over a decade, delivering the federal money to child care, over \$300 million by 2007-08. We are increasing the quality of daycare. I don't know where she's getting this information. It's simply not true.

1530

MOTORCYCLE INSURANCE

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a question for the Minister of Finance. I've been hearing from constituents who are concerned about increasing motorcycle insurance rates.

I recently received a letter from a constituent who, like many others in Ontario, was under the impression that when your government promised to freeze, and then reduce, automobile insurance, insurance rates for motorcycles would also be frozen. I'll read from my constituent's letter:

"I recently had an insurance company ... write up a quote for me for motorcycle insurance in December. They quoted me roughly \$1,300 for complete coverage. When I went to follow up on my quote this week, imagine my surprise when the company told me they had a rate increase on February 1, 2004, and my insurance for my motorcycle would be \$2,325. This is completely unacceptable."

Minister, is this another broken Liberal promise? Why are motorcyclists around this province not enjoying a reduction in insurance rates?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I appreciate the question from my friend from Parry Sound-Muskoka. I simply want to tell him that in the initiatives we took on automobile insurance for private passenger

cars, we did not include motorcycles. We didn't make the commitment during the campaign.

He's right that there is a significant rise in premiums for insuring motorcycles, for a variety of reasons, including the fact that it is motorcycles that often give rise to the most serious and debilitating kinds of accidents, which are most costly in terms of their health care implications. But I will tell my friend that as we continue to reform the market and transform the systems for assessing damage and bring better competition to the marketplace and bring about an ability for customers to fine-tune and specify needs in insurance, I am confident that rates in this area will also begin to moderate.

Mr Miller: The rising cost of insurance is not only affecting individual motorcyclists but is negatively impacting the entire industry. The motorcycle industry is a \$1.25-billion industry that employs over 8,000 people; however, it is an industry in Ontario that has suffered due to rapidly increasing insurance rates. Sales of motorcycles throughout the rest of Canada increased 10.9%, while here in Ontario sales are down by 8.4%.

I'm also concerned that high insurance rates will affect Canada's largest sport bike rally, which happens to occur in the beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka and will be happening this year on July 9 to 11, in case you decide you'd like to attend. It is imperative that the high cost of motorcycle insurance be addressed sooner rather than later. What is the timeline for reduced rates for motorcyclists? When will motorcyclists enjoy lower rates?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I'm not sure whether that was a supplementary question or an invitation to participate in the rally and the show. I'll look at my calendar, and if I can be there, I will.

As to motorcycle insurance rates, I want to repeat: Although we did not make a commitment—our commitment was to deal with the eight million of us in Ontario who must have automobile insurance so we can get to our jobs, so that we can tend to our families—we have taken the steps necessary to begin the rate reduction of up to 10% on average. Regrettably, our initiatives did not include motorcycles, but we will look at it, at the urging of my friend from Parry Sound-Muskoka.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. We've said many times that the key to a prosperous economy in Ontario is investing in our number one resource, that being our people. We know that to build a strong workforce in Ontario, we need to help all people, our young people and our not-so-young people, upgrade their skills so that they can find success in our highly skilled, knowledge-based economy.

Your announcement last week regarding apprenticeship training programs was welcome news to my constituents in Hamilton. As the ambitious city, Hamilton's economy relies on the continuous development of skilled trades, and as such, I am confident that this investment

will benefit Hamilton and also the future of Ontario. As part of that announcement last week, our government approved several projects at Mohawk College, a wonderful post-secondary education facility in my riding. Could you please tell this House and the people of Hamilton more about these important investments?

Hon Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I thank the member from Hamilton West for that question. Mohawk College is located in Hamilton. I am really pleased to say that Mohawk was one, of all the colleges in Ontario, submitting very strong proposals for apprenticeship programs. Indeed, Mohawk College has received almost \$1.1 million for their apprenticeship programs. Those programs will include new equipment for automotive service technicians, electrical trades and the steam fitter apprenticeship programs. They had already upgraded their curriculum. This will now give them the equipment to do the job for apprentices.

Ms Marsales: These projects are certainly good news for current and future apprentices in the Hamilton area. They are also invaluable investments for our local Hamilton economy. I understand that, in addition to the apprenticeship announcement last week, an investment was also made in pre-apprenticeship programs. Could you please tell this House what a pre-apprenticeship program is and how this investment impacts on our local economy in Hamilton?

Hon Mrs Chambers: Once again, I am grateful to the member from Hamilton West for giving me the opportunity to say that the pre-apprenticeship program actually helps would-be apprentices to upgrade their skills in preparation for taking part in these apprenticeship programs. They also have the opportunity to get some work experience so that they will know for sure that this is indeed the program for them.

Mohawk College actually put forward two proposals, which will have them receive \$434,000 in addition to the almost \$1.1 million that they received. These programs include one at the Stoney Creek campus, where there will be a pre-apprenticeship program offered for sheet metal workers. There is also a partnership between Mohawk and the YMCA of Hamilton and Burlington. That will be a program introducing these individuals to truck and coach technicians.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which I picked up yesterday in Walkerton at the Tim Hortons. There was an awful pile sitting there on the desk. It says:

"Whereas every day, 1.5 million Ontarians, including seniors, health care workers and students, purchase a basic meal that costs less than \$4; and

"Whereas a new 8% tax on such meals will disadvantage low-income Ontarians; and

"Whereas adding a tax for the first time on a glass of milk, a salad, a bowl of soup or a cup of coffee will affect a total of 1.5 million Ontarians each and every day in restaurants and cafeterias across the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not impose a new 8% tax on basic meals under \$4."

1540

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): It's the same petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas every day, 1.5 million Ontarians, including seniors, health care workers and students, purchase a basic meal that costs less than \$4; and

"Whereas a new 8% tax on such meals will disadvantage low-income Ontarians; and

"Whereas adding a tax for the first time on a glass of milk, a salad, a bowl of soup or a cup of coffee will affect a total of 1.5 million Ontarians each and every day in restaurants and cafeterias across Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not impose a new 8% tax on basic meals under \$4."

That's on behalf of my constituents, and I have 2,200—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Petitions. The member from Simcoe North.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas every day, 1.5 million Ontarians, including seniors, health care workers and students, purchase a basic meal that costs less than \$4; and

"Whereas a new 8% tax on such meals will disadvantage low-income Ontarians; and

"Whereas adding a tax for the first time on a glass of milk, a salad, a bowl of soup or a cup of coffee will affect a total of 1.5 million Ontarians each and every day in restaurants and cafeterias across the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not impose a new 8% tax on basic meals under \$4."

I'm pleased to sign that.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they've been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario's professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry or re-entry of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce."

I'm pleased to sign my name to this petition.

TAXATION

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas every day 1.5 million Ontarians, including seniors, health care workers and students, purchase a basic meal that costs less than \$4; and

"Whereas a new 8% tax on such meals will disadvantage low-income Ontarians; and

"Whereas adding a tax for the first time on a glass of milk, a salad, a bowl of soup or a cup of coffee will affect a total of 1.5 million Ontarians each and every day in restaurants and cafeterias across the province;

"We, the undersigned"—165 of us—"petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not impose a new 8% tax on basic meals under \$4."

I have proudly signed that petition.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition which is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I've signed the petition myself and I agree with it. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the parliamentary tradition in Ontario of presenting annual budgets in the House of the Legislative Assembly has existed for decades; and

"Whereas the previous government in 2003 showed disrespect for our public institutions and the people of Ontario by presenting a budget inside a private, for-profit auto parts factory; and

"Whereas the previous Speaker of the Legislative Assembly condemned the actions of his own party's government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to uphold parliamentary tradition and hold a public presentation and debate of the 2004 budget, and every budget thereafter, by our publicly elected members of Parliament inside the legislative chamber."

TAXATION

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas every day, 1.5 million Ontarians, including seniors, health care workers and students, purchase a basic meal that costs less than \$4; and

"Whereas a new 8% tax on such meals will disadvantage low-income Ontarians; and

"Whereas adding a tax for the first time on a glass of milk, a salad, a bowl of soup or a cup of coffee will affect a total of 1.5 million Ontarians each and every day in restaurants and cafeterias across the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not impose a new 8% tax on basic meals under \$4."

I sign my name in agreement.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the parliamentary tradition in Ontario of presenting annual budgets in the House of the Legislative Assembly has existed for decades; and

"Whereas the previous government in 2003 showed" great "disrespect for our public institutions and the people of Ontario by presenting a budget inside a private, for-profit auto parts factory; and

"Whereas the previous Speaker of the Legislative Assembly condemned the actions of his own party's government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to uphold parliamentary tradition and hold a public presentation and debate of the 2004 budget, and every budget thereafter, by our publicly elected members of Parliament inside the legislative chamber."

I will add my name to this petition.

AUTISM SERVICES

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

"Whereas our new Premier, Dalton McGuinty, and his Liberal government made a campaign commitment to expand funding for valued therapy for autistic children; and

"Whereas the families of autistic children continue to call upon the province to extend funding to children six

years and older who will benefit from intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) funding; and

"Whereas the new Premier has admitted, 'We simply don't have enough people right now with the skills to help those children under six, let alone those over the age of six'; and

"Whereas the Liberal Premier, Dalton McGuinty, described the current cut-off age as unfair and discriminatory;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to force the government to live up to its promise and extend funding to children six and older who will benefit from intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) treatment."

I support this and affix my signature.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I have a petition today:

"Whereas the parliamentary tradition in Ontario of presenting annual budgets in the House of the Legislative Assembly has existed for decades; and

"Whereas the previous government in 2003 showed disrespect for our public institutions and the people of Ontario by presenting a budget inside a private, for-profit auto parts factory; and

"Whereas the previous Speaker of the Legislative Assembly condemned the actions of his own party's government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to uphold parliamentary tradition and hold a public presentation and debate of the 2004 budget, and every budget thereafter, by our publicly elected members of Parliament inside the legislative chamber."

I affix my signature.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I now have over 3,000 petitions from seniors in my riding.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government was elected after promising in their election platform that they were committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors but are now considering delisting drugs and imposing user fees on seniors; and

"Whereas prescription drugs are not covered under the Canada Health Act unless dispensed in a hospital; and

"Whereas the federal Liberal government refuses to acknowledge this as a necessary health service despite the Romanow report's strong support for a national drug program;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately and unequivocally commit to end plans for the delisting of drugs for coverage under the Ontario drug benefit program;

"To immediately commit to ending plans to implement higher user fees for seniors and to improve the Ontario drug benefit plan so they can obtain necessary medications; and

"To instruct Premier Dalton McGuinty to demand more health care funding from Ottawa instead of demanding more funding from seniors."

1550

TAXATION

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas every day 1.5 million Ontarians, including seniors, health care workers and students, purchase a basic meal that costs less than \$4; and

"Whereas a new 8% tax on such meals will disadvantage low-income Ontarians; and

"Whereas adding a" new "tax for the first time on a glass of milk, a salad, a bowl of soup or a cup of coffee will affect a total of 1.5 million Ontarians each and every day in restaurants and cafeterias across the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not impose a new 8% tax on basic meals under \$4."

I'm proud to sign my name to this petition.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): Mr Speaker, you'll recall that last week I said there were petitions coming in—about 6,000 signatures. I'm getting more signatures here from the petition by Joan Faria and her colleagues.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To immediately commit to action and funding to ensure the rights and protection of our senior citizens living in nursing homes and retirement homes throughout Ontario."

TAXATION

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of customers at the Crystal Beach Tim Hortons on the Niagara Peninsula. It's signed by Chris Cook and Chris Beck, among others, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas every day 1.5 million Ontarians, including seniors, health care workers and students, purchase a basic meal that costs less than \$4; and

"Whereas a new 8% tax on such meals will disadvantage low-income Ontarians; and

"Whereas adding a tax for the first time on a glass of milk, a salad, a bowl of soup or a cup of coffee will affect a total of 1.5 million Ontarians each and every day in restaurants and cafeterias across the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not impose a new 8% tax on basic meals under \$4."

In support, I affix my signature.

FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition from my constituents in Parry Sound-Muskoka.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas municipalities are solely responsible for funding fire services; and

"Whereas the previous government committed \$40 million to help small and rural communities in the purchase of new emergency firefighting equipment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario proceed with a program to support municipal fire services for the purchase of life-saving equipment, and that the province develop a rural response strategy in consultation with municipal fire services."

I support this petition and affix my signature.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government was elected after promising in their election platform that they were committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors but are now considering delisting drugs and imposing user fees on seniors....

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately ... commit to end plans for the delisting of drugs for coverage under the Ontario drug benefit program;

"To immediately commit to ending plans to implement higher user fees for vulnerable seniors and to improve the Ontario drug benefit plan so they can obtain necessary medications;

"To instruct Premier McGuinty to demand more help from Ottawa instead of demanding more funding from seniors."

I have affixed my signature.

SMOKING BAN

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "Whereas the Minister of Health for Ontario has permitted the administrator of the Penetanguishene Mental Health Centre in Penetanguishene, Ontario, to impose a total smoking ban in the maximum security Oak Ridge division and on the outside grounds; and

"Whereas the decision to impose the ban was made by an executive administrative committee comprised of non-smokers ... without any opportunity being given to the

inmate/patient residents and employees thereof to address the issues and concerns upon which it was made; and

"Whereas the executive administrative committee alleged that it was instituted on the basis of tests which proved that the specially ventilated designated smoking rooms were leaking, but have never produced any evidence of the alleged tests and the ministry itself claims to have no knowledge of them; and

"Whereas the executive administrative committee and the Minister of Health have completely ignored repeated requests when the majority of inmate/patient residents and employees, including non-smokers, for the return of smoking; and

"Whereas the provisions of the Tobacco Control Act and the Smoking in the Workplace Act which prohibit smoking in specific areas do not apply to a place that is used for lodging or residence; and

"Whereas the majority of inmate/patients at Oak Ridge are federal prisoners detained under the Criminal Code of Canada as a result of the commission of criminal offences who would be permitted to smoke if they were detained in a federal institution under the jurisdiction of Corrections Canada; and

"Whereas all other government buildings throughout Ontario permit smoking outside of the buildings within feet of the doorways, and the two local medical hospitals in the Penetanguishene-Midland area permit smoking in specially ventilated designated smoking rooms as well; and

"Whereas all other psychiatric facilities have continued to permit smoking, with the exception of Brockville, which permits it on the outside grounds only; and

"Whereas the total smoking ban has prevented the inmate/patient smokers (who comprise 70% to 80% of the institution's population) from sharing a common cultural behaviour and social interest with their families and friends who also smoke;

"We, the undersigned inmate/patients and employees at Oak Ridge, our families and friends and others, and members of the local community, including non-smokers who are disturbed with the situation, hereby petition members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to require that the Minister of Health permit smoking to continue at Oak Ridge or, at the very least, permit smoking to continue on the outside grounds."

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AUDIT STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA VÉRIFICATION DES COMPTES PUBLICS

Mr Sorbara moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 18, An Act respecting the Provincial Auditor /
Projet de loi 18, Loi concernant le vérificateur provincial.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I'm delighted to have this opportunity to say just a few words on the substance of this bill, the political philosophy behind it, why we introduced it and what impact it will have on us in the Legislature and, more importantly, on the people of Ontario.

Could I just take care of a little bit of business first and note that the time allotted is, I understand, one hour, and I will be sharing my time with my colleague the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, the member from Etobicoke Centre and the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, who is my parliamentary assistant, by the way.

The Provincial Auditor, in this Legislature and in this province, has historically played an increasingly important role in ensuring the transparency and accountability of just about everything we do as a government. Bill 18, An Act respecting the Provincial Auditor, which will amend the Audit Act in the province, is a very significant step in strengthening the role of the Provincial Auditor.

By the way, once this bill is law, we rename the office and he or she becomes the Auditor General for the province of Ontario. That's neither here nor there; that's a little bit of nomenclature. The fact is that every province and the national government use the term "Auditor General," and Ontario will adopt that. What is much more important is the new powers that will vest in the Auditor General, or the Provincial Auditor, as a result of this bill, and I want to spend some time on that.

Before I do that, I want to put this bill in a bit of a political context. As you know, during the recent election campaign that ended on October 2, one of the themes of our party, the Ontario Liberal Party, was in the area of democratic renewal, democratic reform, improving our democratic system. To be sure, reforming our own procedures here and the way our democracy plays out doesn't really create new employment and doesn't add food to the table and doesn't deal with the size of classrooms and doesn't deal with waiting times, but it's still a very important component of what we do as a government, because it deals with the very way in which we govern ourselves.

1600

There were a number of very specific items in the campaign proposals, and I'd like to talk about a couple of them in anticipation of dealing with the Audit Act.

The first, and the one that I think is closest to my own political heart, is our commitment to have fixed election dates in Ontario. It really transforms very significantly our democratic system. I look at the table officers and I think they wonder about how you organize and run a Parliament that isn't subject to the whim of a Premier to call a general election and to dissolve the Legislature. But I personally think that bringing about fixed election dates in the province of Ontario is a very important improvement and reform in our democracy. I believe that because it takes power away from the Office of the Premier and puts that power back in the hands of the

people in this room, the 103 of us who make laws and pass those laws in this chamber.

Once we've passed a bill to establish fixed election dates, the timing of an election is dependent not on when a government leader determines it's a good idea, but on when the Legislature has determined the election shall take place. I think that's a very important reform and I understand that some time over the course of this year, the Attorney General will be making submissions in that regard.

One of the other things we said during the election campaign, and that we have already dealt with in this Legislature: a bill to ban partisan advertising. I think that bill, as much as anything, touched on some of the concerns that the broad population of Ontario had about the previous administration, because all of us as residents and citizens of Ontario had the "benefit" of seeing basically partisan political advertising arriving in our mailboxes, being presented to us on our television screens or on our radios really throughout the eight-plus-year history of the previous administration.

The sum total of that advertising represented hundreds of millions of dollars in, I would say, wasted expenditures, because really that was all about a government using taxpayers' money to tell taxpayers what a great job the government was doing. When you see it in those terms, you see how important it was to initiate that reform, to put it in the form of legislation.

My colleague, the Chairman of Management Board, did that prior to Christmas in the fall sitting of the Legislature. I recall when we were having that debate, it was referred to as "historic legislation," perhaps the first of its kind in North America, to put an absolute ban on the waste of taxpayers' money in partisan advertising. I hope the thinking behind that kind of reform can underpin and be a foundation for all of the things we do on our agenda for democratic renewal.

We took some steps to bring to the attention of the people of the province, through freedom of information amendments and other initiatives, to open the windows, to open the curtains, to shine the bright light of day on two of our most important companies, Ontario Hydro—now Ontario Power Generation—and Hydro One. The initiatives of the previous administration had basically drawn the curtains closed and shut off those very important corporations from the light of day and political inspection by members of this Legislature and the general public. The steps we've taken, I think have been very helpful indeed.

The Audit Act is of a significantly different category, because what we do as we amend the Audit Act and enhance the powers of the Auditor General is give much more power and authority to every single member of this Legislature, whether sitting on this side of the aisle or that side of the aisle. Let's remember that the Auditor General, as he will be called soon, is an officer of this Legislature. He is a public administration official who reports not to the government, not to the cabinet, not to the Premier, not to the Chair of the Management Board;

the Provincial Auditor reports to this Legislature. His responsibility is to follow the direction of the 103 people elected to this House, to inspect and report on and verify all of the expenditures made by the government on behalf of the members of this Legislature.

So his powers, like those of the Ombudsman, are unique. He or she does not take direction from the cabinet and doesn't take direction from the Premier; the Provincial Auditor gets his instructions from those of us who sit in this House as MPPs. This bill expands the power of the Provincial Auditor in a number of very significant ways. In expanding the power of the Provincial Auditor, you expand the power of the members of this Legislature—all of us: government members, official opposition members, third party members.

As we move toward passing this bill, we should remember why it is that we're doing it and what it is that we will be achieving. Probably the most important expansion of those powers is the authority in this act to allow the Provincial Auditor to do so-called value-for-money audits in a wide range of institutions and organizations that, up until this time, have not had to account to the Provincial Auditor.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): It's about time.

Hon Mr Sorbara: My friend from Trinity-Spadina interjects and says, "It's about time," and we agree with him. We agree with him that it's about time. I point out to him that we committed to it in our campaign, and we introduced it shortly after we were sworn in.

I think it's worth it to explain what a value-for-money audit is. Essentially, a value-for-money audit gives the Provincial Auditor the capacity to inspect and report on expenditures made by institutions such as universities, community colleges, school boards and the like, to review the expenditures of those institutions and those organizations and report back to the members of this Legislature about whether or not true value was derived from the expenditures made by them.

Why is it important to us to hear about that through the Provincial Auditor?

Mr Marchese: To all of us.

Hon Mr Sorbara: To all of us. Well, that's simple. I think the simple answer is that we have the burden in this House of levying the taxes amongst the 12 million of us in this province who actually pay for the programs. So we raise the money by way of the taxing power of this House and we allocate the money under laws and regulations made by this House to a wide variety of institutions. So surely this House needs the power to have a Provincial Auditor who can review the expenditures and determine whether we derive value for money.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Transparency.

Hon Mr Sorbara: As my friend from Brant says, this gives us a new level of transparency in the management of the public's business.

Mr Marchese: What about reviewable grants?

Hon Mr Sorbara: My friend from Trinity-Spadina is interjecting about reviewable grants. I tell him, had I

more time on this occasion, we could get into that topic in great detail. Unfortunately, I have promised to share the time, and I just want to take the final couple of minutes—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Sorbara: I just want to tell my friend from Trinity-Spadina that as this bill moves through the Legislature, I think it's possible that some will say, "Now, this goes too far. We cannot interfere with the autonomy of crown corporations or hospitals and inspect their level of expenditures."

1610

Our view is very different. This is not a bill that imposes an eye or an inspection that is unwarranted. This bill will give us the capacity to make sure that as we allocate the revenues we derive from taxpayers, those funds are spent wisely and they're spent well.

I know that there's going to be a good, healthy debate on this bill. I look forward to monitoring that debate, and in the end, that this bill will pass, I hope, unanimously in this Legislature. My friends from the New Democratic Party, I think, intend to support it. I'm not sure where the official opposition is, but then I'm not sure about where they are on any particular matter at this time in the evolution of their political history.

Mr Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak on this bill. I encourage its swift passage.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Continued opening debate?

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I would like to thank the Minister of Finance for his words in leading out this debate today and setting the tone and language that will be imparted with this bill.

In the few moments that I have to speak in support of this bill, I would like to allude to what we have imparted and to what I have imparted during the fall campaign and what I have imparted since that time, time and time again here in the House and in committee, and that is that we do need accountability. With Bill 18, accountability will be front and centre. For example, it'll match very closely to that which we had talked about as we went out around this province with Bill 8, the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, when we talked about accountability. We talked about accountability agreements and we talked about Ontarians wanting a government that will be held accountable. They want agencies, departments and the like in public Ontario to also be accountable for what they do and for the money they spend.

With Bill 18, we are working through amendment to open up government and its related departments and agencies, to bring the voice of Ontarians to Queen's Park. I was elected to represent my riding here at Queen's Park and I'm doing that to the best of my ability, but I do know that when I campaigned, the words "accountability" and "Make sure that our tax dollars are spent wisely," were in the minds and on the lips of those people I met going door to door and those people I've talked to since. They have spoken to us in pre-budget town halls and what not. They continue to speak to us, and we will

continue to listen to them through that dialogue. They are talking about a government and departments and agencies that are transparent, responsible and accountable. We know that transparency and accountability are the best safeguards of public service, and I hope to outline this in my presentation here in the few minutes that I have.

Not only will this bill change the language of amendment, as an example, and it was outlined that the auditor would now become the Auditor General, but it will expand the authority of the provincial Auditor General to provide value-for-money audits, as was explained by the minister, something that Ontarians have been saying to us, especially after seeing the concerns with value for money at the national and provincial levels during the past number of years and months.

For example, last spring—and this, once again, was outlined by many of my constituents as I went from door to door—Ontarians and constituents expressed loudly and clearly their concern with the great waste of taxpayers' money by the former government when a budget was delivered outside the confines of Queen's Park. They were annoyed. That was expressed very clearly. It was expressed in letters to the editor and in the pre-budget public town halls that I had. They saw, when speaking of value for money, a government wasting taxpayers' money outside the House when a perfectly fine forum was in place in this House.

They support what we are doing, they support what Bill 18 stands for, and they support the idea that we have a government that will look after and will put in place and publicly make the expressions that their money is being spent wisely. They witnessed these important tax dollars being wasted. With the money that was wasted just in that situation, think of the number of textbooks that could have been purchased for schools in our ridings. Think of the number of different medical items that could have been purchased for hospitals and what not, from the money that was wasted. That's what this bill is going to do. It's going to give the Auditor General that chance to look at the books, examine the books, and make sure that the money is being spent wisely.

Accountability is what Ontarians want. Ontarians will have an Auditor General who will have the power to scrutinize the spending of not just the Ontario government but also all of its crown corporations and transfer partners. This bill will allow the Auditor General to audit the hydro companies and all related organizations. We know that Ontarians would surely love to see this.

The Minister of Energy, with full-scope value-for-money audits in place, should never have to face what our energy minister has faced in recent months and what my seatmate, the honourable member from Etobicoke Centre, as the parliamentary assistant has faced during the past few months, where Ontarians have been disgusted at what has been divulged and what has been opened, to the extent that it has been. But they want to see more. I think that the Auditor General will have that chance, and will have that authority, to deliver more. I look forward to that.

There's something else that I would like to say. It has been a rite of spring for some time now that hospital administrators, school board directors and superintendents have had public scrutiny of their salaries. This, again, will be an opportunity that those other crown corporations and transfer partners, such as Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation, will also have that opportunity. Here in Ontario, we have that information, of employees and directors and what not, with their salaries being made public too. I think there is a lot that's going to be revealed in the books when this happens. I think it should happen.

We will have checks and balances. We will have regard to economies and efficiencies in the departments that I just alluded to. That's what Bill 18 is all about. There must be procedures in place to measure and report on the effectiveness of programs. The Auditor General will be given this authority. Ontarians have wanted these assurances for a long time that public money is well spent.

This past weekend, I had the opportunity of going into our local college, St Lawrence College in Cornwall. I have been working very closely with the president and the CEO, president Volker Thomsen and CEO Pat Finucan, with regard to concerns and problems with that college. They, I am sure, are excited and very happy to see that the Auditor General will have this chance to go into the books. They certainly would not have anything to hide because they have expressed everything to me.

Do you want to know the greatest opportunity that I had to see where dollars and cents were spent? It was in the open house that the early childhood education program put on on Saturday morning. What an opportunity to see young, dynamic Ontarian students who were taking those dollars and making sure that in programs that weren't at the college—that had been in the past but had left for some years and are now back at the college—they are getting the best bang for the buck out of them. The directors of the program and the students were saying, "We need more. We need more."

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I think in needing more, what we will also need is to make sure those dollars that are already there are being spent wisely. Something that's going to happen here is that the Auditor General will be able to see that the public, and the public who are supported by those dollars, will speak loudly and clearly. They're doing it in public expression, as I saw on the weekend, and they will continue to do it as we move forward and get this bill passed in the House and the Auditor General has the responsibility to deliver.

I'm looking forward to this. I know that the senior who's sitting at 4 Gray Avenue in Long Sault in my constituency is looking forward to this and she's watching this afternoon. She's a senior, the mother of 12 children, and I'm number two on that list. She said to me when I got here, "Make sure that the government dollars are well spent." I'm here looking after her needs, after the needs of the constituents of Stormont-Dundas-

Charlottenburgh, of Ontarians, and I think the Auditor General is going to have the responsibilities that we want him or her to have.

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): It's a pleasure to be able to stand up in support of Bill 18 and my colleagues. I'd like to begin my discussion of Bill 18 with a little bit of history. A number of irregularities finally became apparent in the government's books after they had been hidden for many years. These findings made it necessary to use new and fundamental legislation to redefine the office and the person of the Provincial Auditor. These problems, including considerable inaccuracies in the public accounts, which I will speak to later, were so serious and so harmful to the province at large that they could be termed, and I will quote, "errors of grave nature." In fact, there were some indications that very serious incidents had occurred within the government treasury itself.

Clearly, the Provincial Auditor needed more independence from the government as well as a more solid mandate for working on behalf of the public to keep government honest. Government needed to view the public's main watchdog in an entirely different and far more respectful light.

There was a situation in 1885 that led to the introduction of the Audit Act, 1886. That act established a Provincial Auditor who could be independent of the treasury department. I believe that Bill 18, before us now, is the modern-day equivalent of that legislation that was passed 118 years ago. Bill 18 redefines the role and the person of the auditor to make them more relevant to today's environment and to the scope of government spending. In fact, in 1886 our budget was \$3 million. Today it's \$75 billion, including a very large deficit that was bequeathed to us by, shall we say, more recent history.

The major new provisions of Bill 18 will expand the capacities of the auditor and our respect for that auditor and for the position. It will rename the Provincial Auditor as our Auditor General. With few exceptions, most of the government auditors throughout the world carry the title of Auditor General. I would imagine our auditor has dealings with counterparts in other countries, and this renaming will give him or her at least in part an equal footing in terms of respect, as well as the office. As well, the title of Auditor General has a domestic cachet that inspires, as I indicated before, the respect the auditor truly deserves.

The title of Audit Act is changed to the Auditor General Act. The Auditor General can examine accounting records relating to reviewable grants directly or indirectly received by municipalities.

The Auditor General will now conduct special audits of grant recipients other than municipalities and of crown-controlled corporations and their subsidiaries. Under the current Audit Act, the Provincial Auditor may carry out only limited scopes of audits of grant recipient organizations. The scope of a special audit is specified and obstruction of a special audit is prohibited. There is

an updated description of the scope of the opinion that the Auditor General is required to give about the financial statements of Ontario.

Bill 18 changes the act to govern the collection, use and disclosure of personal information by the Auditor General. There is a new prohibition on the disclosure of information and documents that are subject to specific types of privilege unless the privilege holder consents.

These new additions to the act are in keeping with new concepts for the protection of privacy in general.

Bill 18, in combination with Bill 25, the banning of partisan advertising and other actions by our government, constitutes yet another fulfillment of our campaign promise. These activities will contribute greatly to the accountability and transparency of the government of Ontario.

On a more practical level, Bill 18 will help ensure that organizations across the broad public sector deliver more value for money, as my colleague indicated. Let me remind you that 50% of total government spending or expenditures go directly to broader public service and to organizations. The Provincial Auditor will have the power to fully scrutinize public sector organizations such as hospitals, school boards, colleges and universities so that the people of Ontario can be assured their tax dollars are spent, and spent wisely.

As the former chair of a board, I can tell you that I often wished for the opportunity for the auditor to come into the school board to audit those books in a very public and accountable way. With my personal experience as a school trustee, I can tell you that our public bodies need the kind of oversight only an experienced professional auditor can bring. I can also tell you that the pressure to spend the public's money unwisely as much as wisely is almost overwhelming, because often you have to spend it or lose it.

By giving the Auditor General the right to investigate spending by crown-controlled corporations and transfer partners, trustees, board members and executives, they will be much less tempted to let their personal feelings indicate spending priorities, amounts and recipients. Clearly, expanding the powers of the Auditor General will affect the thinking at Ontario Power Generation and related energy public bodies, and frankly we welcome the help of an untethered, fully enabled Auditor General to remove any temptation from these companies to waste the public's money.

The best reason to expand the scope of the auditor is contained in his latest report. Just this year he revealed the following. The Tory government failed to address a serious backlog in the court system. The Ontario Court of Justice has the highest backlog of criminal cases in 10 years. They allowed \$60 million in fines to go unpaid. The auditor found 150 types of security risks at Ontario courthouses, including unauthorized weapons, assault, vandalism and theft. Deadbeat parents are \$1.3 billion behind in their court-ordered child support payments.

At the Family Responsibility Office, caseloads per worker are too high—600 to 1,700, versus 400 for

Quebec and 335 for Alberta—and 90% of all calls to the call centre get a busy signal and require repeated phone calls. In some cases the follow-up doesn't happen for a year, and it takes an average of 3.5 years to complete a case.

Some 95% of inspection resources are spent on video retailers, which received a total of eight complaints, while there have only been nine inspectors of debt collectors despite 4,108 consumer complaints.

The economic development ministry spent over \$4.3 billion without a strategic plan. The strategic skills initiative spent 75% of its money on construction equipment instead of skills training. The ministry wasted money on untendered contracts and expensive trips. The auditor found that the PCs doled out over \$1 billion of the innovation trust fund without ministry or legislative oversight, a plan, or even cabinet approval.

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Some 27% of waterworks did not submit the minimum number of samples to test for E coli or fecal coliforms. Three hundred non-municipal waterworks have never submitted a test at all. Water inspectors visited only 54 of 357 private water treatment plants and 44 of 1,119 smaller plants in designated facilities. Total inspection activity is at 63% of the 1995-96 levels.

There are eight boards of health without a full-time medical officer of health. Public health departments, 100% funded by the province, receive the same amount of funding as they did in 1991. None of the province's public health units conduct all necessary inspections of food preparers to avoid food-borne diseases, and 14% of children have not received all of their vaccinations by the age of seven.

We already have taken steps to rein in on why spending has been allowed to go on for years before the present government took control. Last fall, we introduced the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Amendment Act, 2003, to require Hydro One, Ontario Power Generation and their subsidiaries to disclose employees who earned \$100,000 or more. Now the Auditor General will have a stronger hand in seeing that we get value for our money when we pay these kinds of salaries.

Ontario citizens have the right to know how governments spend their hard-earned tax dollars. Governments in general believed that in 1886, when they named their first Auditor General, and throughout history, and we believe it today. Unfortunately, some individual governments had wandered from this concept.

We do believe in democracy. It must be increasingly more relevant, more apparent, more transparent and more accessible to our people. We do believe in this relevancy and accessibility, and we rest on the knowledge that people will feel better about their government when they know they are dealing with people who are transparent.

The Auditor General's office holds the key to much of that knowledge, and we have made the key fit the door that the former government had held quite closed. Bill 18 is no less an important component of our plan for the most ambitious democratic renewal in Ontario's history.

We are answering the repeated requests of the standing committee on public accounts to expand the powers of the Provincial Auditor to improve accountability of public organizations. We are responding to the demands of the public, who want more with regard to their economy and to the efficiency in the spending of their tax dollars. And we are taking appropriate procedures to measure and report on the effectiveness of programs that will make this province work so much harder and so much better in the future.

I cannot believe there is anybody in this House who doesn't stand for accountability. I know that when I knocked on the doors in my constituency, the seniors in particular would say, "I ask you to spend my money but to spend it wisely, to let me know what you're spending it on and to measure it, please, for its effectiveness."

That really isn't very difficult to ask, and it's certainly, as well, within the realm and the responsibility of this particular government to respond to. It is an important and integral part of this party's platform as we follow through on the promises and commitments that we have decided to make on behalf of the people who elected us to this Legislature.

So I wholeheartedly support the proposed Bill 18, and I understand that there will be additional speakers to this bill.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): The people of Ontario sometimes have a hard time keeping up with all the different levels of government and how they operate. There are many of us in this Legislature who have had experience—as the member from Etobicoke Centre has, she's been a very involved trustee at the local Toronto school board and, I think, the Etobicoke school board. I mention that because the ordinary citizen assumes there is a very detailed oversight of all expenditures at every level of government, whether municipal, provincial or federal. I know that my experience at the local level and coming to the provincial level is that there's a certain gap in terms of oversight.

I can recall sitting in opposition—in fact, I sat on the public accounts committee—trying to find out how government at the provincial level approved expenditures. I remember inquiring about certain massive expenditures and essentially being told those are not dealt with in the House, they're not dealt with at this committee, they're dealt with in another ministry or dealt with at estimates. There was always a reason we couldn't deal with an expenditure item here on the floor of the Legislature. The assumption that there's line-by-line scrutiny is a vast stretch. That's why I think the public would be pleased if they understood that Bill 18 is really being put forward in terms of trying to bring more oversight to provincial expenditures.

We must remember that almost 80% of the monies the province raises are transferred to different partners; for instance, hospitals, school boards and other agencies. So there is a desire—I remember John Gerretsen, the member from Kingston and the Islands, saying for a number of years that there should be an expansion of the

Provincial Auditor's role. He thought it would be beneficial for the taxpayer, in terms of his or her knowledge, but also beneficial for elected officials, the MPPs, trying to follow the money trail as it left the Ministry of Finance and went off to various municipal partners and crown corporations, so we knew we were getting value for money.

It's all about trying to ensure that money that's very difficult to raise—as we well know, it's difficult to get people to accept taxes in the first place, but it is extremely difficult to levy these taxes, collect them and then not really be able to account for them. Bill 18, in essence, gives greater power and authority to the Provincial Auditor so that he or she can follow the money trail. That's what it's about.

I've had people ask me, "Ontario Power Generation spent \$3 billion supposedly trying to fix Pickering. They didn't fix it. What did they do with \$3 billion?" I get asked that question as an MPP, and I think members on the opposite side get asked the same question. I'm sure, whether they sat in the government on that side or in the government on this side now, it's difficult to answer. In other words, how could we not ask for an accounting of the \$3 billion spent? In part, they brought in the four consultants, the American dream team, who got paid \$40 million to spend \$3 billion. They didn't fix the problem, and we don't really know where the money went. It's not meant to be a partisan comment. It's just a question that is legitimately asked by ordinary Ontarians: "Don't you, as elected officials, follow that kind of expenditure?"

We are being asked how the Ministry of Education spends its money. Where does it go? Who can follow the money from the Ministry of Finance? Who allocates money to the various boards across the province or to colleges and universities? How was the money spent? Was it spent wisely? Frankly, we didn't really have a solid case to defend the expenditures, because our Provincial Auditor—and the number one watchdog of our expenditures is our auditor—could not go to the colleges or universities or municipal partners or crown corporations like Ontario Hydro or Ontario Power Generation and ask to look at their books. He couldn't do that.

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We're not talking about a minor expenditure. We're talking about landmark expenditures in our hospitals, in the health care field, to our municipal transfer partners and in hydro—OPG, Hydro One etc. We thought there would be checks and balances when we first came to this place, but in essence there are not enough checks and balances. Bill 18 is putting forward a very strategic use of one of the best departments in this Legislature, and that is the Office of the Provincial Auditor, who operates independently and reports to the Legislature. He does not report, nor is he accountable, to the government. He is accountable, through his annual report, only to the Legislature, and therefore is directly accountable to the people of Ontario.

Like many wonderful things we have in the British parliamentary system, the Office of the Provincial

Auditor is one of the most valuable offices we have here in the Ontario Legislature. The independence and objective oversight that office has are for the benefit of the people paying the taxes and to ensure that the money is well spent.

Up to this point, there were too many parts of government that were off limits to the Provincial Auditor. In other words, the Provincial Auditor could not go to Ontario Hydro, nor could he go to the various hospitals that spend billions of dollars, to see where and how effectively the money was spent.

We know that over past years the Provincial Auditor has done an amazing job in bringing to light essential weaknesses in our expenditure controls. We have seen it time and time again. I can remember the Provincial Auditor questioning the financing of and the whole process of selling off 407. He was the first one to red flag that. He said, "Is this an appropriate way of selling off a government asset?"

I remember him doing a report on the Family Responsibility Office and on our court system. It doesn't matter what area of government, the Provincial Auditor in past years has gone into these areas under provincial jurisdiction and written reports, and the annual report, which are available for the public to view and question, for the opposition to raise and for the media to expose. I think it's a very healthy part of our Parliament here in Ontario.

Like many things we have in this crazy thing called democracy, it's sometimes taken for granted. I think it's even better than the American system. You have this independent person who is directly responsible to the Legislature. I think they have the office of the Comptroller General in the United States, which is a little different. The Provincial Auditor is an office that I think is well worth every cent and every dollar we pay that person and all the people who work with the Provincial Auditor.

This act, for the first time in this province, significantly increases the scope and parameters of this office. This is a benchmark piece of legislation. I know people watching at home will say, "Well, here's another piece of legislation. The MPPs are up there talking about more legislation." Bill 18 is almost what I would call safety legislation. It's for the protection of the people of Ontario that money is not going to be squandered or sometimes not spent. It's not as if they're doing it deliberately; there just isn't someone giving a second objective opinion on how money is expended in another department of government.

I think many of the ministries sometimes welcome the fact that the Provincial Auditor comes in and not only suggests improvements but has solutions for them. It is a very important role, not only to criticize and point a finger at the ministry and say, "You shouldn't have spent that money that way and you spent too much," but also to make recommendations on how to get better value for dollars. Then they also indicate in the provincial report that the Provincial Auditor will return the following year to see if there has been any progress or success.

It is, again, one of the unheralded parts of government that doesn't get much profile. It usually gets one or two days of profile when the Provincial Auditor's report is tabled and, depending on how damning it is, it gets more media or less media. But it is an ongoing job of this Provincial Auditor to scrutinize, to give objective analysis and to do a value-for-money audit on the expenditure of billions of dollars. We cannot afford in this province to have any money improperly spent, and by that I mean money that perhaps could have been better focused in a certain area or more strategically used. We can't miss those opportunities. We've got to make sure that the money is targeted to where it can do the most good.

That's why in this government, too, we're also talking about outcome-based, results-based budgeting. If there is money being spent in a ministry, or now in some of these crown corporations, we want to make sure that those crown corporations are getting good outcomes. By that I mean, is there better service for that city in Ontario, better service for the students in our colleges or universities? Is there duplication or overlap? These kinds of comments will be priceless, I think, as the Provincial Auditor goes into these new areas, which, again, up until this point—and if this bill passes—were behind the curtain. They were off limits. The Provincial Auditor was not allowed to trespass into those hallowed halls of the universities or colleges or hospitals.

It's not being done to penalize our colleges or universities or hospitals. In essence, it is an opportunity to get a second opinion, to get a group of professional auditors who have experience in government to go in and compare apples to apples, to ensure that those investments of taxpayers' dollars bring the greatest result for the greatest benefit to the people of Ontario. We know there are not always going to be glowing reports about our ministries, as there were about ministries of the previous government, but at least at the end of the day we can all say that the Provincial Auditor's intentions were good and the Provincial Auditor was right in bringing attention to that kind of expenditure, or lack of proper expenditure, and we agree, whether we are in the opposition or in the government, it was money well spent.

That's why in Bill 18 we are going to give that Provincial Auditor, whose name we are now going to change to the Auditor General, the ability to scrutinize crown corporations, colleges and universities and some of our municipal agencies for the first time. Just to give you an example of how thorough this is, for instance, the Provincial Auditor under this act will have free access to records, all books, accounts, financial records, electronic data, processing records, reports, files, all papers and things on property belonging to or used by a ministry, an agency of the crown, a crown-controlled corporation or grant recipient. So the auditor will have unfettered access to all papers, books and documents.

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The Provincial Auditor will also have the power to examine under oath any person on any matter pertinent to

an audit or an examination under the act. That is significant power we are giving the Provincial Auditor. That Provincial Auditor can go to the university, college, hospital and can ask for an interview under oath. I don't think many of us realize that the Provincial Auditor had that power.

Also, for the purpose of exercising powers or performing duties under this act, the Auditor General may station one or more members of the office of the Auditor General in any ministry of the public service, agency of the crown or crown-controlled corporation. This is another useful tool. In other words, the Provincial Auditor doesn't just go in there for a day and say, "We want to see your books." The Provincial Auditor can designate members of his or her staff to stay in that ministry or crown corporation to get a fuller understanding and grasp of the operations of that crown corporation so that they can have a full, comprehensive appreciation of the intricacies of that operation as it is in that crown corporation or ministry. So they can have someone appointed to remain there to get a thorough understanding before they make a recommendation. It's not a hit-and-run, in-and-out type of audit which would not do service—

Mr Marchese: Thorough.

Mr Colle: Very thorough, as my colleague for Trinity-Spadina says. He wants to go in there to have a very thorough organizational view.

Another very important power that the Provincial Auditor has under this act is that no person shall obstruct the Auditor General or any member of the office of the Auditor General in the performance of a special audit. No person can destroy any books, accounts, financial records, electronic data—anything that's relevant must be kept intact so there's no way they can avoid laying all the data in front of the Provincial Auditor.

These are very necessary powers that go a long way in expanding the office of the Provincial Auditor. In the long run, by going into these crown corporations, we'll hopefully avoid some of the questionable expenditures in the past in some crown corporations or funding partners, and put them on guard too that all of us are under scrutiny. All of the ministries have been under scrutiny in the past. Whether it be the Ministry of Health or Ministry of Tourism, all ministries were subject. But now it's not only the Ministry of Transportation that has to be cognizant of the Provincial Auditor coming in, it's also now the presidents of colleges and universities and the hospital boards. They have to understand that they will all be subject to scrutiny. Not for the purpose of, as I said, vilifying or scapegoating, but for the purpose of ensuring that there are uniform standards of expenditures that are transparent and result in the best outcome possible, not for us so much as legislators, but for the 12 million people of Ontario who want to see their tax dollars—which are hard to come by—spent properly and wisely.

We've got before us a very significant piece of legislation which will not make the headlines in the major newspapers and it won't be the topic of late-night

talk shows or talk radio, but this is preventive medicine. What is the old saying in Leamington about an ounce of prevention—if you drink that much tomato juice you'll be able to avoid the doctor? "A tomato a day will keep the doctor away." That's what they say in Leamington. This is prevention. This is inoculation against monies—and as I've said, we're talking about massive expenditures of dollars that we transfer to our partners. We are going to use the Provincial Auditor to follow the money trail to ensure that everyone is using the same benchmarks, the same proper accounting practices and the same approach to ensuring that the people of Ontario will say, "That was money well spent. I won't agree with all the money that was spent, but at least it was money well spent because I have faith in the Provincial Auditor"—as, I think, most Ontarians have—"that there's someone acting as a watchdog." None of us in this chamber—never mind an ordinary citizen who's trying to make a living working, trying to raise a child, trying to take care of their elderly parents—has time to monitor \$75 billion of provincial expenditures. We can't do it.

That's why we need a watchdog of our money, like a Provincial Auditor, who in essence is someone we entrust with a very important role. We trust that job, and the Provincial Auditor, to ensure that every aspect of government is subject to scrutiny on a regular basis. As I said, it's a scrutiny that continues with benchmarks and reports that I think are very useful for us as legislators, even very useful for the ministries involved and, hopefully, the crown corporations involved.

This is really a bill, as I've said—I'll call it the bill for protection of the tax dollar. It's really a protection for the 12 million Ontarians who want to see their dollars spent wisely. I hope we will get unanimous consent on this bill. I don't think there's anybody on either side of the House who doesn't believe there should be expanded oversight over all of these billions of dollars that we spend.

I'm confident that the Provincial Auditor, given this expanded role, will in essence do the hard work required so that the taxes paid will be spent wisely and prudently for the good of all Ontarians. I think Bill 18, again, is a positive step. It's a benchmark piece of legislation, that I hope we can all support. It's good legislation, and I would hope you'll all support it.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to be able to rise and make a few comments on the lead-off speech by the minister and all of his colleagues on the Liberal side. I look forward to this debate, especially when the House is as warm as it is today. We know there's a lot of warm weather coming up in the next few weeks. It should be very interesting to debate a lot of these types of bills.

We've been referring to this bill as the Sheila Fraser act, simply because it brings out a lot of points that we've seen Paul Martin suffer at the hands of some of the Sheila Fraser report that came out and condemned many of the things that Mr Martin and Mr Chrétien had accomplished in the last 10 years.

I think what's important is that there's nobody, I don't think, in any political party that doesn't want to see more transparency in government. That's why I believe it will get a lot of support. I would suspect that in the end all three parties will support creating the position of Auditor General, I'm assuming after Mrs Fraser. I think for that reason, we on this side of the House will probably support that in the end.

However, we do look forward to all the debate that will take place on this. Obviously a lot of things have to be corrected, some of the things about partisan advertising. It's amazing when someone talks about the millions of dollars spent on partisan advertising by the previous government, yet if you go back through the NDP, through the Peterson government, through the Harris government, the same amounts of money, in perspective, have been spent on government advertising, plain and simple.

You're doing it already. Look at your Trillium hand-out, from the Trillium board. In the last copy I saw, there were eight pictures of members of the Liberal Party in the Trillium book. Plain and simple as that.

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: No NDP members, no Conservative members, but eight Liberal members. I look forward to further debate on this.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments. The member from Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: Spadina. Trinity-Spadina.

The Deputy Speaker: That's what I said.

Mr Marchese: That's what you said. I was just repeating it, in case. I have every reason to believe that all of the New Democrats will support this bill. I haven't caucused with them, but I have every reason to believe that we will be supporting it. The whole issue of transparency is important to taxpayers and citizens alike. We all want accountability in terms of where public dollars are being spent. So in this respect, there's no reason to think that anybody would be opposing such a bill.

Here is a question we pose to you: This individual has expanded powers, beyond that which he or she had in the past. We now know that they will be able to do audits of hospitals, school boards, universities, colleges and crown corporations such as Hydro One and OPG. This leads me to believe that the expanded powers give more burden and greater responsibility to the Auditor General and his or her staff, and therefore it would seem to me that that individual could use a couple of bucks.

1700

There is nothing in the bill or in this discussion that makes me believe that you folks have thought about this, or if you did, none of you articulated the need to put in a couple of dollars for this office. I would assume you would agree with me that if he is going to have these expanded powers, with all these additional responsibilities, then the money should follow. Mike, I know you said you can't put it in the bill, but I didn't hear any one of the five speakers—because I think there were four or five—say, "Money will follow. Don't you worry." Make me believe that.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I am very happy to speak to this, to the Minister of Finance and his comments, to his parliamentary assistant and my colleagues. My comments have to do with the fact that I grew up in a family of auditors. My father is a chartered accountant, and beyond that, he's a certified fraud examiner. He's one of these people who actually goes into the court as an expert, whom the courts rely upon to tell about fraud.

One of the things we've looked at is that you have a situation where there is a difference between what's known as a quantitative audit and a qualitative audit. A quantitative, as you know, is whether the credits and the debits add up: Is there any money missing? But it doesn't answer the question, how was the money spent? Was it spent well? Was it spent to achieve the result that was requested or was it wasted?

We have audits with all of our transfer partners. When we send 80% of the money that we have to spend out to school boards, hospitals, universities and colleges, we merely ask, is the money missing? "We gave you the money. Did you spend it?" We don't have the ability, until we pass this act, to ask the question, are we getting value for that money? When you put in quantitative audits, what you get is people knowing, "Don't steal the money. Someone is checking. Someone is checking to make sure that at the end of the project it all adds up. Don't even think about stealing the money."

But now we need to progress. As the member for Etobicoke Centre said, we haven't reformed this act since the 1800s. We need to go into the modern age. The modern age says that we have to ask that question, are we getting value? The mere fact that we can ask that question will raise the standards and send a message to all of our transfer partners that, "Now you are accountable for the value for the money that you receive from taxpayers." That's why I am very pleased to support this act and I'm encouraged that other parties will support this act as well.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I appreciate the opportunity to rise to speak on Bill 18, An Act respecting the Provincial Auditor. I very much appreciate the comments. When you read the bill, there are a couple of areas of concern that I hope we'll be able to find out about, possibly through the committee process.

Under subsection 4(1): "The term of office of the Auditor General is 10 years and a person is not eligible to be appointed to more than one term of office." In 4(2) it says: "The Auditor General continues to hold office after the expiry of his or her term...."

If I was in government and didn't want a new person after 10 years, I just wouldn't appoint a new one. Effectively, what somebody could do is extend that time as long as they wanted to so that the same individual could retain that time. I think some timelines need to be in there that within a period of time he has to be replaced. Otherwise, some governments could continue on with the same individual if they desired. Well, that's up to the government of the day.

The other one is 9.1(1), where it speaks of "a reviewable grant received." What is a reviewable grant in order

to be looked at? What is the process to initiate a review of that grant? I think some of this stuff comes out, as members will find out, through the regulation process. These are just some of the things I think we would like to find out about. "On or after April 1, 2005, the Auditor General may conduct a special audit of a grant recipient with respect to a reviewable grant received...." What is the process to start that? Can the public at large come forward and say they'd like to have this reviewed? Is there a process to go through that? Hopefully the government members may be able to enlighten us on what the intent is in that area as well.

The municipalities were also mentioned. I wasn't sure I caught the full remarks on that, but it says in subsection 9.1(2), "Subsection (1) does not apply with respect to a grant recipient that is a municipality," and then when you get down to 9.2(1), "The Auditor General may examine accounting records relating to a reviewable grant received directly or indirectly by a municipality." What's the intent there and how would it unfold? Hopefully the members will let us know that.

The Deputy Speaker: Reply to the questions and comments?

Mr Colle: I want to thank the member from Oshawa for those comments. Staff have already started looking at those. I think as we go through this bill, those are the kinds of questions we've got to clear up. I also want to thank Mr Wilkinson, the member from Perth-Middlesex, "the agricultural capital of Canada," he calls it. Maybe we should call this the Wilf Wilkinson Memorial Act, since his father was a famous auditor from Belleville. They called him the "Belleville auditor." I also want to thank my colleague from Trinity-Spadina.

This bill is quite valuable to all of us, as I think the comments have noted. If we can make this bill work, it's going to bring a lot more credibility, not only to the Legislature and how we spend money, but also to all our transfer partners. At first, there was reluctance to do it. I remember the origins of this when, as I said, the member for Kingston and the Islands, who was chairman of the public accounts committee, would constantly ask in opposition that this kind of legislation be brought forward. We made that commitment in our platform, we made that commitment in opposition, and we are now bringing Bill 18 forward because it is sound, it is what is needed, and I think in the long run the public of Ontario will be better served if there's this wider power to the Provincial Auditor.

As the member from Trinity-Spadina said, there is an issue of resources here, that taking on more tasks will certainly involve appropriate resources, and we're cognizant of that. But in essence I think there's agreement that the functions of the Provincial Auditor are worthwhile functions that we need to invest in, and this bill, for the first time in decades, expands the role of a very important office, the Provincial Auditor.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure this afternoon to rise on behalf of the opposition party, and I

should alert you that I will be sharing some of the time with various members of our caucus who will have the courage to stand and speak to this very important bill.

I think the member from Simcoe North said it best: It's called the Sheila Fraser Act. That should ring some sense of fear into the Minister of Finance who, as we all know, is potentially under investigation, just prior to getting to present the first budget in the province of Ontario—under a cloud, I might say, but I won't go down that road. I'll just say that the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, is here today. I was pleased he responded to the member from Oshawa, who raised a couple of very good points, I might say. In fact, they're points that are intended to be part of my remarks this afternoon, however brief they might be.

I looked at this bill, and I'm going to go at it in sort of—it's not really that large. For those viewing this afternoon, it's 12 pages. Half of it's French, so that means it's six pages and, of that, there are two full pages of scheduled agencies. So it really comes down to about three or four pages, pretty much general wording, changing the name from the Provincial Auditor to the Auditor General, and giving him authorities that everyone in the House would agree with.

In fact, in some ways it's a compliment to me personally—and I don't want to take this—because I did serve, as Mr Colle would know, as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance for a couple of years, and take great interest in this topic. In fact, it was on December 3, 2002, that I introduced Bill 218. It was a private member's bill because, having been in the ministry and listened in public accounts, as well as on the finance and economic affairs committee, which I am still on, I introduced this bill entitled An Act to amend the Audit Act to insure greater accountability of hospitals, universities and colleges, municipalities and other organizations which receive grants or other transfer payments from the government or agencies of the Crown.

1710

In fact, when I reviewed and parallel these two bills, the current bill that we're debating, Bill 18, and my own bill, basically the title on my bill is a little bit longer, more specific, but I thank Minister Sorbara for respecting the hard work that I and my caucus at that time did to bring accountability.

In fact, I have some remarks on the former Provincial Auditor, Mr Peters, for whom I had a lot of regard and, I would say, considerable respect. I'm going to introduce this and try to see if those listening today can sort out the explanatory notes, mine or theirs, and see if there is any difference.

"The bill will amend the Audit Act to enable the Provincial Auditor to have access to the financial records of crown agencies, grant recipients and crown-controlled corporations. The auditor is authorized to audit the financial statements of grant recipients. It is an offence to obstruct the auditor in the performance of the audit. The auditor is allowed to examine people under oath. The

auditor is required to keep information confidential that comes to the auditor's attention while performing the duties under the act."

That's just the preliminary. Here's another one; it's another bill. For the viewers here, we're not all chartered accountants, but I think we have to have oversight on public expenditures. No one would disagree with that at all. I think for the general public it's interesting to understand that there's about a \$70-billion-plus budget, and of that \$70 billion, I would say about \$60 billion is transferred to the partners that are mentioned that will be under this audit. Those partners would be municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals, often referred to as the MUSH sector. It will extend to crown corporations, which would include OPG, Hydro One—the whole energy sector would be subject to this in terms of those public sectors.

The explanatory note in another bill I'm reading here should be somewhat common:

"The Audit Act is amended to change the title of the Provincial Auditor to Auditor General and to make corresponding changes to the title of the Assistant Provincial Auditor and the name of the Office of the Provincial Auditor." These are basically mechanical things that they're doing. There is one section here, as I start to move into this, and the member for Oshawa mentioned this as well:

"Section 4 of the act is ... to specify the term of office of the Auditor General is 10 years. A person is not eligible to be reappointed." I would like clarification of reappointment within the term, because there are some other sections here that would allow the auditor to be suspended, which raises the question of the independence of the auditor. I think there needs to be some further work done on this bill. I hope that it would be sent to committee.

"The new section 9.1 of the act authorizes the Auditor General to conduct special audits of grant recipients, other than municipalities"—that was raised by the member for Oshawa—"and of crown ... corporations and ... subsidiaries. The expressions 'grant recipient' and 'special audit' are defined in ... section 1 of the act."

All this is to say that there is no one on any side of the House who doesn't want complete accountability and transparency. So my sentiments in remarks from the opposition are that we for a long time—not just the fact that I introduced this, and I'm going to repeat it, back on December 3, 2002, and now again the bill, as I've demonstrated, is almost a word-for-word lift. I thank legislative counsel for the advice they gave me and for the fact that we followed it—in fact, I would say that even in the public audits you would see that much of the advice given by the auditor during the auditor's annual report while we were in government—it was clear that we were very supportive of many of the recommendations he made. I think the member for Trinity-Spadina outlined it earlier, when he asked the question of the minister or his parliamentary assistant, "Where's the money?" Quite honestly, they're creating not just a new

name for the office and the new roles and the much broader expanding mandate, but where is the money? We will be looking carefully.

The Minister of Finance announced today that the budget would be on May 18, which is good. I think technically we will be waiting to see if there is any money. In fact, I will also be looking at it from my own audit perspective, as is my duty, to see if any of the 230 promises are fulfilled: the 8,000 nurses; a maximum of 20 students in classes in schools; or perhaps they will roll back the toll on the 407; or maybe they will reduce auto insurance. In fairness, I doubt it. They haven't enacted any of those.

In fact, the member from Whitby-Ajax asked a question of the Minister of Finance today, and I didn't feel satisfied by the answer. I'd like to refer that question directly to the auditor. Would that be allowed under this bill? Could members, who are completely blocked from any kind of reasonable answer, follow up with the auditor directly from this House? I'm looking at members and ministers in the House today.

I know there was an announcement last week by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. I've had it from my college president, it's in the press, it's in the media: It's not enough. They've put a freeze on tuition for two years, which is good, but that reduces the revenue to the colleges and universities and it reduces the money for our students. I put it to you that there will be fewer classes and there will be more in the classes. That's what will happen. I can tell you as sure as I'm standing here that they've really introduced larger class for the colleges and fewer specialty classes.

The problem I find throughout most of this is that the accountability must be extended. In fact, I think members of the opposition and certainly the critics of those particular ministries must be able to refer unanswered questions in this House—whether it's the tolls on the 407 or whatever—to the auditor, to specifically direct their actions. I put that on the floor here today. Hopefully there will be responses to it.

I'm going to start driving a small bit further down into the detail. This is the Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review that was presented here by Mr Sorbara earlier in the year. I just want to get a couple of things on the record. On page 8 of Mr Sorbara's document—I'm reading his own document here—he says this “must be our watchword as we begin to redesign government.” This is under the title “Restraint.” It goes on to say, “So we're asking our partners in health care, in education and in the rest of the broader public sector to temper their requests for more.” I think that's a very clear signal of predetermining the outcome of fair collective negotiations.

It goes on to say, under “Redesigning Government,” in the minister's own words, “In education, for example, we need stronger student achievement in numeracy and literacy. We need to reduce our health care waiting lists and we need to improve our air quality.”

There are a number of commitments there, not just the 230 promises—I'm trying to stay focused here. I'm

wondering if we can audit that. That would be a good place to start. We're all here. We go to the people, we lay out our platform, and I am of the view that this is an issue before all parties here today. I'd like to have all the platforms costed and put to the people honestly, because today's public are much more informed, and I think much more engaged, than in years gone by.

This is in response to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, the pre-budget consultation process. I'd be happy to supply copies of any of these documents I refer to and quote from to persons who want copies. Just call my constituency office or log on to the Web site and you will find out who I am and what I'm about, as well as listening to your concerns.

In the pre-budget consultations there were a number of things outlined that I think are important. There is a list of recommendations; for instance, “that the government keep its promise to tell taxpayers what specific improvements we expect from every new investment, and provide a value-for-money analysis for any program spending increases or new program investments.”

That sounds reasonable. That recommendation was turned down, voted down by the six members of the government, the Liberal caucus members. It was under that whole shadow of “Were they listening?” that the 49 recommendations, almost exclusively, were turned down—almost all.

1720

For instance, we had a very respectful presentation in Niagara Falls. The member from Erie-Lincoln, Mr Hudak, was there. I commend him on the record here today. He stood and presented a very valid argument. This is recommendation number 39. I'm going to read it. He drafted it, I believe:

“That the requests from the Sherkston Shores campground for the introduction of a tag/sticker program on recreational vehicles and the Minister of Finance to stop the current policy of assessment be referred to all affected municipalities, especially the city of Sarnia, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, MPAC and the Ministry of Finance for their comments; and

“That these comments be forwarded to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs for consideration.”

This just brings me to one point that I really want to put on the record here: MPAC, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp, is another corporation—

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): You formed it. You wrote the rules.

Mr O'Toole: You're the government now.

There's a presentation from John Holt from CLT Canada—and Marcel Beaubien, I might say, did a great deal of work in the whole area of assessment, trying to get it right.

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: They're barking; they're trying to shut me down. I'm trying to be as patient and respectful as possible, under some pressure.

MPAC would be a very good place to start the audit, I'd say immediately.

Interjection: Yesterday.

Mr O'Toole: We may be getting behind on that audit.

Again, I'm just drawing to your attention that these are recommendations to make the government more accountable. There was one section in here—I'm looking for it and I'll probably find it. This is with respect to Mr Peters's audit of the \$5.6 billion. I'm quoting from page 5 of the standing committee report:

"The report on the review of the 2003-04 fiscal outlook prepared by Mr Peters builds a case for a potential \$5.6-billion pressure on the province's finances, but there are several factors that must be considered at the same time. Firstly, Mr Peters clearly states in the introduction of his report that he 'carried out a review, which does not constitute an audit.'" The reason that the report does not constitute an audit is that Mr Peters was granted access to only a select amount of information, selected by the government, the McGuinty government. Under Bill 18, they will be in non-compliance with the bill for refusing to submit all the documents, a barrier to the auditor. Maybe we should go back and have a look. Is the bill strong enough? Does the bill go far enough? "Without complete access to all the government's financial information, it was impossible for Mr Peters to perform a complete analysis of the status of the provincial books."

If we had Sheila Fraser there—talk about the ad scandal.

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: The interim auditor is just that, interim, because Mr. Peters has left. I would make a recommendation here on the floor today that we hire Sheila Fraser. Let's get to the bottom of this thing now. Let's start and go forward.

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: Secondly, for those listening, Mr Peters's report contains an opinion of the state of the province's finances at a point in time that he expresses. Here's a quote: "no opinion as to what the actual deficit for the year ending March 31 ... will be". There it is. That's the end of the quote. Those are very technically important details.

There's one other thing, in the short time I have left. I want to make sure that my good friend from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford has a chance because, as a practising lawyer—and Deputy Speaker, I might say—he hardly has enough time, sometimes, to fulfill all his duties outside of here. But he does want a lot of speaking time. You can usually catch him Thursday morning, if you're so interested in his legal interpretation. But you'll have to wait until Thursday.

The last validation—this is quite an important document. For those members that are paying attention—there are a few—this is a report of the office of the provincial controller, fiscal and financial policy division, Ministry of Finance. It was issued in January, 2004—rather current. I'm quoting from page 19:

"As in the private sector, public sector organizations are subject to independent audits. The government of Ontario relies on both internal and external audits. Internal audits work with the ministries to ensure that proper control of spending and other financial activities are followed as activities are planned and carried out." Here's the point: "The office of the Provincial Auditor acts as the external audit for government. In December 2003, the government tabled amendments to the Audit Act that would give the office wider powers, including value-for-money audits."

Really, that's what I want to get down to. It's fine for ministers to stand in their place and pontificate, whether it's on energy or health care. We heard today that many vulnerable people are being denied access to a life-saving treatment by the Minister of Health. A value-for-money audit would determine, whether it's a child with autism, if it is a value-for-money experiment. When the Attorney General, Michael Bryant, is in court denying people access to autism treatment—intensive behaviour; quite expensive. A value-for-money audit and those things, I think, are appropriate in those particular cases.

I do have a number of other points that I would like to make, but out of respect for my good friend and seatmate, Mr Tascona, who has been quite constant at nagging me to wrap up my time. So with that, there's much more to be said on Bill 18. I support it conceptually because it really does replicate—for the readers, they should get a copy of Bill 218. It was introduced by me on December 3, 2002. Thank you for your time, and good bill.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I am going to be speaking with a number of other colleagues. I really appreciate the member from Durham relinquishing the floor today. I would say that, as usual, he spoke to the point. He said he was only going to speak 10 minutes, but what's the extra half-hour?

Mr O'Toole: Let's have it audited.

Mr Tascona: It's already on the time. I don't think you have to audit it.

I want to speak on the bill. This bill has got a lot of different provisions that I think have to be addressed, perhaps with some amendments coming forth. One of the clauses, which is clause 12, the new article 9.1, limits the power of the Auditor General to begin work under this bill until after April 1, 2005. The date today is April 19, 2004. So the act is set up so that the auditor cannot go back farther than grants received after this bill comes in effect. What's happening is grants that are being given to these agencies, crown corporations and their subsidiaries, now and up to April 1, 2005, are not going to be subject to this act.

I would suggest very seriously that if this act is to have any substance at all, it should be amended to give the auditor the power to act immediately once this legislation is given royal assent, which in all likelihood could be given at any time, depending on how fast the government wants to put this bill forth. There were two bills last week when I was in the Chair that were given royal

assent. Bill 15 and Bill 47 were given royal assent last Thursday. So the government can move this bill along.

1730

Obviously it is a bill that has some merit. And certainly we are looking to give the auditor greater powers. As the member from Durham indicated, that's something he was looking for even last year, in terms of greater authority.

There's also the new section 10, which gives the Auditor General broad access to information and specifies that "disclosure to the Auditor General ... does not constitute a waiver of solicitor-client privilege, litigation privilege or settlement privilege." This section has to be explored in detail as to its effect on the use of the information given to the Auditor General.

There's also a new section 11.2, which deals with access of the Auditor General to information, and punishment if access is impeded or documents are destroyed. The question is, is the punishment outlined sufficiently severe, where we see that you have impeded access or documents have been destroyed?

There is also a new section 12, which outlines the content of reports of the Auditor General. We should question whether these statements are sufficiently broad, and do they allow for special reports?

There's also a new section 27, which deals with secrecy on behalf of the Auditor General employees who receive information. Section 27.1 deals with the issue of privileged information. The question is, how did these clauses affect the use of information given to the Auditor General?

The new section 27.2 deals with the protection of personal information which may be given to the Auditor General. The question is, are these protections sufficient? That's something that has to be looked at.

Now, the bill may be sufficient, as far as it goes, but it should be amended to give the Auditor General the power to begin operation under it immediately. I don't know why there's a delay until April 1, 2005. That's going to have to be explained by the minister responsible.

The question also is, what is the balance to be achieved between the protection of privacy and the use of information by the Auditor General?

Also, what resources will be dedicated to the Auditor General to ensure the ability of the office to carry out work under this act? That's something that's going to have to be dealt with.

But I want to refer, at this point in time, to the red book, as we'll call it, which was part of the election platform of the Liberals. It says, "Government that Works for You," and in that document there's a section that deals with "Accountable agencies and appointments." It states, "We will lift the veil of secrecy on government agencies and appointments. Major government agencies, boards and commissions are large and important bodies. Yet they operate with too little accountability to the people of Ontario."

Well, one of the major accountability issues—and I sit on the committee for agencies, boards and com-

missions—is when there are appointments to these agencies and boards of the government; and the one loophole that the government has decided not to close under the standing orders is where there's an interim appointment, which means it's not a full-time appointment and reappointments. Neither one of those comes before the agencies, boards and commissions committee. They bypass it, because if you do an interim appointment—the government has done a number of them, for example, under the Ontario Municipal Board and the Assessment Review Board, to name two; and also under the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corps boards—that's another one where they made an interim appointment. Neither one of those appointments went through our committee. And any reappointments will not go through this committee.

I think if the government wants accountability, if you're making appointments as the chairs and the head persons of those particular commissions, why wouldn't you allow the agencies, boards and commissions committee to at least interview these individuals? I've put that on the record at that committee a number of times, and I would hope that when we deal with democratic renewal, that's something the government's going to look at in terms of dealing with that particular committee to make it truly accountable.

The other question is, there seems to be a slowdown with respect to the FOI process, which is certainly not playing by the rules in terms of releasing or answering information from FOI requests. That is just not being done. If we're talking about transparency and accountability, why is that freedom of information process being slowed down? There has to be an answer given to us by the Minister of Finance, who's responsible for this particular bill.

Just to digress for a moment, I want to point out to the members that I just received number 11, the MPP birth certificate update from the Minister of Consumer and Business Services, Jim Watson. I appreciate getting this update because it proves to me that he is a very responsible minister.

But he still hasn't fixed the problem. He goes on to say, "I'm pleased to report that the office of the registrar general is securely on track to provide better service to the citizens of Ontario. Staff at the ORG are continuing to increase the number of certificates issued. The total number of calls and the number of requests to our call centres continues to see a decline, and there has been a 20% decrease in the average number of telephone calls received from MPP offices."

What he also reports is that 62 person-days of overtime were worked in Thunder Bay and Toronto on the weekend of April 3 and 4. The minister is in the House and I want to thank him for this update. I've been keeping them. I have number 9, number 10, and number 11 now in my office. We had a good conversation the other day, and I want to put on the record that we have just been deluged in my office by these birth certificate requests. What happened was, the registrar's office,

which is responsible for it, had been sending them down to my office. I bring that to the minister's attention and hope that practice is going to stop—I know he's working hard on this problem—because we're not equipped to deal with all these birth certificate requests. I think I probably have the third-largest riding population-wise.

Interjection: We need an audit. Is that dealt with in this legislation?

Mr Tascona: Perhaps this may have to be subject to an audit. That might be a good one with respect to what's going on on this particular issue. But the minister is working with us. I've got number 11, "MPP Birth Certificate Update," and I want to point that out for the record, because I'm looking forward to number 12. My staff is still working hard on that issue, and we're just not staffed to deal with those types of problems.

I also want to digress for a moment to—I was at the multiple sclerosis walk yesterday, which was a tremendous walk in my riding. I believe we raised over \$130,000 for the MS walk. They have a number of issues and one they pointed out to me yesterday, and I'm glad—well, the Minister of Transportation was here. But what he's undertaken to do, to his credit, is to deal with the disabled parking permit program review. To the credit of the Minister of Transportation, he has said that he's going to review this program. I'm looking forward to the disabled parking permit program review because that was an important issue, and I raised it at the walk for MS yesterday. And I can tell you that that's a big issue for the Simcoe county chapter of the Multiple Sclerosis Society newsletter that I received. This walk was across the province. It's also a provincial organization, which is where we're going with this review.

That's something that's very important as we progress with respect to accountability and transparency. So I wanted to compliment the Minister of Transportation on undertaking that review, and also the Minister of Consumer and Business Services for providing me the update number 11 with respect to birth certificates.

I have raised a number of issues with respect to how this bill applies. I don't know whether the parliamentary assistant's here in the House. I'd like to get an answer in terms of why it's not in effect until April 1, 2005. We know this bill can be put through fairly quickly and given royal assent and can be made active fairly quickly in terms of the fiscal year that's coming up. What that really means is that this bill won't be effective until next fiscal year, April 1, 2005. We just entered fiscal year 2004.

That's all I have to say on this bill. I know other members—Laurie Scott wants to speak on this, and other members who are here, so I'll give up my time now—much shorter than the member from Durham in terms of his time—so we can continue.

1740

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): Thank you to all the speakers on this bill this afternoon.

I would like to follow up on some of the remarks that have already been made by my colleagues who have spoken before me. I'm sorry to go over ground that has

already been covered, but I do feel it's important to emphasize some of the areas of Bill 18 which could be strengthened.

As a new member of the Legislature, it's important to bring forward the changes that may help the bill become a better piece of legislation. The first area which our caucus feels could be made better is in clause 9.1. This is a clause that allows the Auditor General to begin his or her work under the new legislation on April 1, 2005, as was mentioned, notwithstanding the fact that this will come into effect on April Fool's Day, which, in my opinion, is never a good idea. But I agree with my colleagues from Durham and Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford that the important part here is that the legislation should come into effect as soon as it is passed, and the sooner, the better.

I understand that there may be a need for some delay in the implementation due to the need to change over other regulations, but I'm sure the minister has received this advice from the lawyer of his ministry. Notwithstanding the ministry's lawyer's advice, I believe it is important for the public to have the legislation become effective immediately upon its passage. Bringing the legislation back to April 1, the auditor cannot go back further than the grants received after this bill comes into effect. Allowing the bill to come into effect immediately allows the auditor to react sooner.

The Auditor General's new powers around the balance between achieving the protection of privacy and the use of the information collected is the second area where we would like to see Bill 18 tightened up. New clause 10 gives the Auditor General broad access to information and specifies that, "A disclosure to the Auditor General ... does not constitute a waiver of solicitor-client privilege, litigation privilege or settlement privilege."

New clause 27 deals with secrecy on behalf of Auditor General employees who receive information. As well, clause 27.1 deals with the issue of privileged information, and clause 27.2 deals with the protection of personal information that may be given to the Auditor General.

The balance between the public's right to know information and the right of the individual to their own privacy is an important issue which many governments, both provincially and federally, have struggled with for many years. My constituents will want to know if this government has taken into consideration this important balance. As an example, what are the assurances from this government that they have cross-referenced Bill 18 with the changes that have been made in Bill 31, the act with respect to the protection of health information? Bill 18 broadens the Auditor General's ability to examine the books of school boards, municipalities and, of course, hospitals. Does Bill 18 contemplate the changes being made under Bill 31? Very often the preparation of legislation within a ministry is done with care and proper preparation within that ministry. However, often in large governments when bills are being prepared which cross ministry boundaries, the due diligence is not as strong.

For example, I hope the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Health and their staff have done the proper work that's entailed in the preparation of these two bills.

In our rapidly changing society, with the advent of new technologies and the explosion of access to information through computers, we want to make sure on this side of the House that the government is properly protecting the right of privacy of individuals yet enhancing the powers of the Auditor General.

The third area which I would like to bring to the attention of the Legislature with regard to Bill 18 is the proper funding of the expanded role of the Auditor General's office. The bill contemplates a large increase in the potential audit capabilities of this office. In this House, we all know that the power to expand the Auditor General's authority is only theoretical if it is not backed up by proper funding and staffing. I look forward to the budget—the date was announced by the Minister of Finance today to be May 18—to hear whether the government will properly fund these expanded powers.

The Liberal government has made many public statements about the perceived size of the province's deficit. This government has already spent \$3 billion of taxpayers' money in the last six months. They have many more promises from their political platform that they must fund. I hope that this government is not increasing the powers of the Auditor General for political expediency. That proof will be in the amount of money that this government puts toward the implementation of this bill.

I have been following the federal government's auditor, Sheila Fraser, and I commend her for all the work she's done. Certainly, transparency and accountability should be the number one priority of this government. There will be an investigation into this government and its actions as soon as possible.

I hope that they do put the money toward the expanded powers of the office and that the government commits to its actions and it's not just rhetoric.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill today. I turn it over to my colleague from Simcoe North.

Mr Dunlop: I'm really pleased to be able to rise and speak for a few moments on Bill 18—as I called it earlier in one of the two-minute comments, the Sheila Fraser act.

I want to thank the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, the member for Durham and my colleague from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock for their fine comments on this particular bill. In particular, I want to thank Ms Scott. As a newcomer to this House, I think she has been a very valuable member of our caucus. We're very proud of the fact that she has done so much hard work and is working very hard on behalf of her constituents in Lindsay and all those little communities that make up the great riding of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock. As you know, she had big shoes to fill with Chris Hodgson leaving this House; he was a very well respected member. I have to say to her constituents what a great job she has done.

We've had some interesting topics already today. The first thing I think of is the comments made earlier today

on volunteer recognition in this House. I think we all look around from all of our different ridings. What a great week it is when we can actually recognize the volunteer work that goes into this great province. We hear it over and over again in our ridings. I spent the whole weekend at various functions. I didn't get a chance to say it in a statement today today but I wanted to congratulate people who really aren't looking a lot today at an auditor bill; I wanted to congratulate the people of Elmvale for the fantastic job they did on the weekend with their annual maple syrup festival.

As well, we talked today about the Ontario Trillium program for organ donation. What a fantastic program that is as well. In different provinces across our country—actually, it's even advertised on some of the hockey games and the sports events. I'm noticing there's a lot more advertising making people aware of that particular drive to make sure more people are aware of that.

Then we get around to the announcement today by the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance says that there's going to be—surprise—a budget on May 18. What a surprise. I wonder how many people guessed that date. We knew three weeks ago that that was the date. When you were in opposition on that side of the House, you begged every year, “We should have a budget by the end of March every year in this House. What's wrong with you?” By God, here we are later, we're back here in this new Liberal government, and you've already stretched it out almost to the first of June. How are the school boards and the hospitals going to get their grant allocations protected? How are they going to know what kind of funding they have to work with?

1750

Why do you think they actually announced May 18—four days after the by-election. You know what? I don't think it's going to be a very pretty budget, and I think those folks over in Hamilton might have a different opinion on this. I think they actually are concerned the Liberals might lose that riding, and I don't think they're going to be very happy about that, so, “We shifted it over to May 18.” I know that Mr Sorbara would never say that, but I think that was the underlying thought behind announcing it in this House today, the same as he announced last week this fantastic decrease in auto rates, a 10% decrease. Yet we've heard nothing but horror stories that everybody's insurance rates are going up. Last week he told us they're going down, and now we're counting on him to commit to those words.

I'm a little bit concerned when he starts talking about the Sheila Fraser act. The Minister of Finance stood up today and talked about all the wonderful things that this government will be doing. I was surprised that he's still on the Americanization-of-Ontario politics. I can't believe this, these fixed election dates.

The minister, Mr Sorbara, when he was on this side of the House, brought in a private member's bill. We couldn't believe it. He wanted to Americanize Ontario politics with fixed election dates. He got very hot, very upset about that. He's still on that path. I don't know if

we want that here in Ontario. I don't like fixed election dates myself. Quite frankly, I can't see the advantage.

I like the fact that we're different than the United States. I'm a true Canadian patriot. I believe that there's something special about having the Premier or the Prime Minister having the flexibility in calling that election date. The Minister of Finance spoke about that quite a bit in his opening leadoff today. He talked about Americanizing Ontario politics again with the fixed election dates.

Very simply, I think it's kind of nice watching Paul Martin run around after the Sheila Fraser reports. We're talking about the Sheila Fraser act here, but I'm referring to the Sheila Fraser reports. He doesn't know when to call an election. Possibly the Minister of Finance or the Prime Minister would like to actually have more—I'm glad now he has that flexibility because he's in big trouble. He's in huge trouble. He looks like it, when you see him speak now. He looks like no one believes him any more. He looks like that.

So that's why I'm kind of interested to see what the Sheila Fraser act will—

Mr Levac: Are you running federally?

Mr Dunlop: No, I'm not, but I'm very interested in Mr Martin. We sat on this side of the House for eight years, and you folks as well, and we watched Mr Martin and Mr Chrétien just crucify the health care system. We watched them crucify our Armed Forces.

Now we're finding out that the Sea Kings are going to be 50 years old before they're replaced. Brian Mulroney was going to have them replaced in 1993. Now they'll be 50 years old. We're expecting young people in our military to float around, to serve our country in 50-year-old helicopters. That doesn't sound like Americanizing Ontario politics.

The other thing—

Interjections.

Mr Dunlop: I'm sorry, I didn't mean to be getting under anybody's skin here.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Dunlop: The other thing he started talking about today was banning partisan ads. That's really interesting. I look at some of the ads we had on in the last couple of years, the ads on Telehealth. What would be wrong with telling the people of Ontario they should have a Telehealth system? We spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on Telehealth. We told the public about how valuable that program was. You're not going to cancel Telehealth, are you? Is that part of your budget plan? You're not going to cancel that, are you? I sure hope not. It's a fantastic program.

I bet all you folks from ridings in northern Ontario really appreciate Telehealth, because it's through the whole 705 now. It's got to be a fantastic program. We had to advertise that. We had to put ads out on that to inform the public. We made millions of little fridge magnets etc to make sure that the public knew about Telehealth.

Flu shots: Partisan advertising is informing the public about flu shots?

Interjection: We didn't say that.

Mr Dunlop: Yes, you did. Flu shots were part of our advertising program. We informed everybody with large newspaper ads all across the province how valuable flu shots were for you. And I think you did the same thing last fall. After you were elected, I'm sure you ran ads asking people to get out and get their flu shots.

Then we have all the information thanking the public, thanking the citizens of our province, thanking our health care professionals for doing a fine job with SARS. There were millions of dollars spent on that advertising, and we informed the public. I really don't think there was anything wrong with that. I would hardly call that a partisan ad.

The fact of the matter is there are so many things—too bad Mr Bradley isn't here right now. The Ministry of Tourism has great programs for the marketing of our province. Even after the SARS recovery—and I know Mr Bradley has followed up on our program with the SARS recovery money. I'm pleased that he has. I think he's done a fantastic job. I think it's important that we market this beautiful province, whether it's in New York state or Quebec or Manitoba or Wisconsin. We have to get people in here to spend their money, and that should get them used to seeing what we have here: one of the most wonderful places in the world to live.

I always brag to my colleagues, especially to the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, Mr Miller, that I have the best riding in the province for tourism. He argues against me every time. I understand this year the bikers are all going to go up to Parry Sound-Muskoka and I'm disappointed. I thought they should have come to Simcoe North and had their convention there because I happen to think my riding is the best riding across the province as far as being an overall good, valuable riding. It's very diverse. I hope Minister Bradley, the Minister of Tourism, will continue to spend money on SARS recovery funding and all those sorts of things. Again, a lot of partisan ads have gone into OTMP. Maybe it's a bad thing, but I hope the minister will pick up on that.

Then you had your town hall meetings. I actually had my own town hall meetings and they were very well attended. I didn't use the expensive brochures that Mr McGuinty supplied. I understand that the consultant who ran those town hall meetings actually cost the taxpayers of Ontario over half a million dollars. Is that true? Maybe somebody can correct me in the Q and A after, but I think half a million of our hard-earned taxpayer dollars, from our working families here in Ontario, to be paid to a consultant to have town hall meetings is far too high. I think he could have done it in a much more orderly manner that would not have cost quite as much money. But we're not going to go there today, OK?

Then we have all the partisan ads about informing the public on things such as black bears and the spring bear hunt and the difficulty Ontario had with that last year. The Ministry of Natural Resources I think has done a remarkable job of trying to send out an educational program to all the different people across our province,

whether they live in a rural community or whether they're tourists or cottage owners actually visiting a rural community here in our province. The MNR has spent literally tens of thousands of dollars on those ads. I don't think that's what you call a partisan ad. I don't think that's a problem.

I see the Minister of Agriculture is here, and we had some good news today on BSE. Anything to help the farmers at this point is fantastic, and I applaud the minister, the federal minister and any of the farming organizations and the cattlemen's associations etc that had anything to do with getting the border reopened.

I'm going to keep speaking for a while, Mr Speaker, so whenever you want to cut me off, that's fine, but I'll be speaking the day after on the next part of the bill. But I do want to applaud you on that, Steve, because our farmers have had a really difficult time. We've had guys going to the welfare offices, and I can tell you that it's really important.

To get back to the partisan ads, I want to get back to the Ontario Trillium Foundation brochure. That's the one that came to my mind recently.

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: That's a partisan ad. It's a Liberal partisan ad. I just cannot believe that, after talking about

partisan ads from previous governments, now we have the Ontario Trillium Foundation. We have to stop this kind of thing. I think if you're going to have eight Liberals in pictures in the Ontario Trillium Foundation newsletter, we should at least have Shelley Martel doing something really neat in Nickel Belt, or my buddy Yakabuski doing something in Barry's Bay. I think everyone deserves that opportunity. I was very upset when I saw that partisan ad in the Ontario Trillium Foundation, which went to all kinds of people across our province; it's in all of our constituency offices. I think it's partisan. I'd like my picture in the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Tim Hudak used to get his.

I think we have to get back to one other thing.

Interjection: Garfield, you've got 15 seconds.

Mr Dunlop: I can't be done in 15 seconds; it's going to take me 10 minutes yet. Can we stay to 10 after? Can I have unanimous consent to stay to 10 after? Were you going to cut us off, Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: I was listening intently to the member for Simcoe North, but now that he has drawn my attention to the clock, it is after 6 of the clock. This House is adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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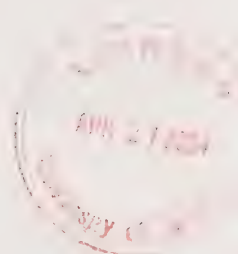
Mardi 20 avril 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 20 April 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 20 avril 2004

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Before we start, we have with us in the Speaker's gallery today John Turner, former Speaker of the House and member of the provincial Parliament, representing the riding of Peterborough for many years, in the 29th, 31st, 32nd and 33rd Parliaments. Please join me in welcoming Mr Turner.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AUTISM SERVICES

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): Our caucus believes that autistic children deserve to receive the best possible intervention services from the government to enable them to reach their full potential. What saddens and angers their parents is that these children have been used as political footballs. The Premier has not kept his promise to extend intensive behavioural intervention treatment beyond the age of six. This was another cynical Liberal promise that was made in writing, during the election, directly to a parent who is struggling to help her autistic child. The government had a chance to redeem itself with families with autistic children, and they missed it.

When our party was in government, we brought in the first intensive behavioural intervention program for children with autism and we made Ontario a national leader in providing these services. We planned to continue to increase funding and expand the program, unlike this government that has broken a promise to hundreds of autistic children and their families.

I want the minister to tell this House how services will be improved. How will they be provided in the future? What will she do to shorten the waiting list for autistic children who need intervention services? Will she set an absolute maximum time between the date of assessment and the initiation of service? How long a wait is acceptable to her? Will she introduce an efficient complaints process for parents who believe their children have been shortchanged? Will she give priority consideration to children who turned six while they were on the waiting list?

Finally, what specific resources will she provide to parents? Will she produce an IBI manual for parents so they can reinforce and build upon the professional treatment their children deserve and should receive?

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): This Thursday I will be attending the 26th annual justice dinner in my area, hosted by the Waterloo Region Community Safety and Crime Prevention Council. I want to pay tribute today to this council, which brings together individuals, businesses, levels of government, educators, police, children's mental health advocates and others to develop strategies aimed at eliminating the root causes of crime. Its solutions are built on raising awareness and bringing the community together. I have found the council to be imaginative, forward-looking and ready to seek real solutions to community safety issues.

Recently, the government of Ontario recognized the work of the council as a best-practices example of collaboration and partnership in addressing the needs of our community and its youth. As well as hearing a keynote address from the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the dinner will honour unsung heroes who work behind the scenes to make Waterloo region a safer community.

I would like to congratulate the members and supporters of the council, including Waterloo regional chair Ken Seiling, executive director Christiane Sadeler, chair Barry McClinchey, vice-chair Irene O'Toole and past chair Peter Ringrose. The work of this council exemplifies one of its mottos: "A connected community is a safer community."

WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): This coming Thursday, April 22, we'll celebrate Earth Day in Ontario, a day that's been recognized in many jurisdictions since 1970. It's a day to celebrate the environment and what we can do to protect it.

After 30 years it has come to this: The province of Ontario is shipping over a million tonnes of trash a year—that's a 125 tractor-trailer loads a day—out of the province onto Michigan soil. Sadly, on this coming Earth Day there will still be no end in sight as to where the garbage would go should Michigan decide to close its borders to Ontario trash. I would mention that Michi-

gan's concerns over allowing Canadian garbage to emigrate to the Great Lakes state is well documented.

Over the last 30 years, since the inception of Earth Day, it's been the NDP and the PCs who have the track record of doing the heavy lifting with regard to environmental legislation, while the Liberals busy themselves renaming open-pit mines as lakes. This is the same Liberal government that has taken on the mantle of environmental promise breakers. Just witness the recent 60% waste diversion commitment by 2008, three years later than the 2005 date the minister told this House in December. On this Earth Day, I would ask the Minister of the Environment to ensure that she has more to bring to the celebration than further empty promises.

GEORGE GROSS

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): Canada and Ontario are very fortunate to have in our midst some of the best journalists in the world. In fact, it's quite possible that Ernest Hemingway left town after serving as a reporter with the Toronto Star simply because he couldn't stand the competition. And our days have been enlivened by some of the world's foremost sports writers and broadcasters.

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate one of the best, George Gross, who was awarded the Order of Ontario for his work as a sports writer, commentator and editor. I'm proud to say that Mr Gross is a resident of my riding in Etobicoke. He came to this country 54 years ago, with a few dollars in his pocket and unable to speak English, like so many other immigrants before and after him.

Mr Gross has enriched our society marvellously well. Not only has he brought life into action, competition and the emotion of sports through his writing for several newspapers and radio stations; he has given considerable support to a number of charities and community events in Etobicoke.

As a member of the Etobicoke volunteer community, he exemplifies the attributes of a volunteer. They give their time, expertise, compassion and care—volunteers such as those with the Dorothy Ley Hospice, who gave 22,000 hours in 2003 to their community, working with people in Ontario to make life better.

1340

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): On Friday, April 16, the board of the Northeast Mental Health Centre made its second round of cuts to services. This time the board cut adult community-based programs and reduced services in the hospital.

The specific cuts include the closure of community-based mental health programs in Elliot Lake and Walden; reduction in services for the assertive community treatment team and the intensive case management program in the city of Greater Sudbury; reduction in the

occupancy rate at the Sudbury Algoma Hospital so that nine beds will be left empty by the end of this fiscal year.

These cuts will have a dramatic impact on adults in northeastern Ontario who suffer from mental illness. Clients living in Elliot Lake will have to travel 160 kilometres one way to Sudbury to access counselling programs. The wait time for counselling and therapy intervention for clients across the Manitoulin and Sudbury districts will increase from the current two months to one year, and some services won't be available at all. Seriously ill patients who need support from the ACT team will have to wait six to eight months. Seriously ill patients needing individual or group rehabilitation will have to wait four months for help. Finally, nine acute care beds will be empty by the end of fiscal year 2004-05 in order to reduce the deficit on the hospital side.

The Minister of Health has said he is working on priority funding for a number of mental health programs and that he'll make an announcement when this is ready. But patients suffering from mental illness are fragile, and they can't wait. If the minister is going to do something for the Northeast Mental Health Centre, he should do it now, so that fragile patients aren't put at even greater risk.

POULTRY PRODUCTS

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): Tonight is game 7 of the battle of Ontario. My favourite team, the Maple Leafs, are going to be facing off against the Ottawa Senators. The restaurants and pubs of this province are going to be full of hungry fans. Yesterday, I heard there was a threatened shortage of chicken wings. We all know what a wonderful tradition chicken wings have become at playoff time.

I just want to assure everyone that they don't need to worry. The chicken farmers of Ontario have leapt into action. At our farm, we are doing our part to make sure there will be wings, whether they're hot, suicide or just plain honey-garlic.

Regardless of whether the Senators or the Leafs go forward, we can be sure that the residents and fans of Ontario are going to have lots of chicken wings, thanks to the chicken farmers of Ontario.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I stand today in celebration of National Volunteer Week and to recognize some of the brilliant contributions volunteers are making throughout my beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka.

For instance, last week students at Gravenhurst High School were presented a certificate of thanks from the Salvation Army for making a contribution of a full truckload of food to the Easter food drive.

During the month of February, students at Victory Public School in Parry Sound took part in a fundraising campaign entitled Hoops for the Hospital. With the

generous support of parents and community members, the students were able to raise just over \$3,000 in support of the West Parry Sound Health Centre.

Meanwhile, in Bracebridge, 11-year-old Martha Wood has for the past year volunteered her time by sewing blankets and sending them to babies in Guatemala. Now Martha is on to another project: She's sewing fabric bags and filling them with pencils, erasers, notepads and books for children in Africa.

These are just a few examples of the thousands of volunteers throughout my riding who put in countless hours of service. They are a vital part of our communities, and their value cannot be underestimated. They not only help those they directly serve, but they strengthen the fabric that holds our communities together. For this, I would like to recognize and thank all those volunteers throughout my riding and throughout Ontario who continue to give so much. May we all be inspired by their example and work to continue and strengthen this great tradition of volunteering in our communities.

RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS AWARD

Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I rise today to recognize an important honour which was bestowed upon a constituent of Brampton Centre. This past weekend, Mr John Boeltjes accepted the Righteous Among the Nations honour on behalf of his parents, Johan and Johanna Hendrick, from Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority.

This medal is one of the highest honours of its kind. It recognizes the sacrifice and courage of his parents, who gave safe haven to Jews in their home in Amsterdam during the Holocaust.

Past recipients of this award include Oscar Schindler and Raoul Wallenberg.

Unfortunately, the Hendrick family was betrayed and Johan was sent to a Nazi camp, where he died five days before the Allies liberated it.

In recent days, we have all witnessed the ugly 'spectre of anti-Semitism that has reared its head again. This honour reminds us of examples of courage, compassion and moral fortitude. If we all care a little more about our fellow man, then maybe one day we can put an end to the hatred that has haunted this world for far too long.

Mr Boeltjes, who is sitting in the members' gallery here today, said it best: "True joy is not caring about you, but caring about others."

TAXATION

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I rise in the House today to congratulate Progressive Conservative caucus members for their tireless efforts in working with the people of Ontario to stop the soup-and-sandwich tax.

By now, people have learned that the Dalton McGuinty Liberals have caved on this issue. They couldn't stand the heat from us, and they couldn't stand the heat

from the hard-working people across Ontario. So what did they do? They got out of the kitchen.

Recently, members of the PC caucus launched petitions calling for an end to the soup-and-sandwich tax, otherwise known as Dalton McGuinty's plan to increase the PST from zero to 8% on meals under \$4. We also relentlessly raised this issue in the House.

It soon became quite clear to us that the Premier was trying to fool Ontarians with the line that this was just part of the strategy to encourage people to eat healthier. People were too smart to buy it, because they knew that meals under \$4 include food items like soup, bagels, chicken wings, salads and even sandwiches.

The truth is, the soup-and-sandwich tax was just another one of Dalton McGuinty's trial balloons from the very beginning. It was right up there with restricting the drug plan for seniors, retesting Ontario drivers, re-instating photo radar and selling government assets like the LCBO. But now these other trial balloons will fly alone, because Dalton personally deflated the soup-and-sandwich-tax balloon by saying this morning that it's off the table.

Breathe a short sigh of relief and hold on to your wallets, because who knows what the McGuinty Liberals will go after next, and who knows what trial balloon they will float next?

We in the PC caucus are very proud today that we acted as an effective opposition in helping to stop the soup-and-sandwich tax. While you can't count on the Liberals to keep their promises, this experience shows that you can count on the PC caucus to be there for the people of Ontario to fight against a tax increase.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

DAY NURSERIES AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES GARDERIES

Mr Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 59, An Act to amend the Day Nurseries Act to allow up to seven children to be cared for in rural areas without requiring a licence under the Act / Projet de loi 59, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les garderies afin d'autoriser, dans les régions rurales, la garde de sept enfants au plus sans devoir obtenir un permis prévu par la Loi.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Lalonde?

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): The purpose of the bill is to exempt day nurseries and private home daycare agencies that receive or provide care for no more than seven children from the licence requirements of the act if the nurseries or agencies are

located in a rural area or in a town or village with a population of fewer than 3,500.

1350

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources):

I'm very pleased to rise in the House today to announce that this government is taking steps to further safeguard Ontario's natural heritage through the preservation and protection of a significant marshland in the Whitby area.

By increasing the amount of protected green space in the province, this government is acting on its commitment to provide the people of Ontario with a cleaner natural environment and a quality of life that is second to none.

We know that natural areas contribute to cleaner air, cleaner water and a cleaner environment. We know they contribute to healthier and stronger communities. And we know that a healthy environment and a strong economy go hand in hand.

Today I'm proud to announce that we're adding another 59 hectares to the area of the Lynde Marsh that is already under protection. The Lynde Marsh contains three provincially significant wetlands—Lynde Creek Marsh, Cranberry Marsh and part of Carruthers Creek—and is one of the best examples of Lake Ontario's lakeshore marshes.

My ministry has worked with local partners to acquire the areas of the Lynde Marsh. These efforts have helped to preserve environmentally sensitive natural features as well as add to the public enjoyment of the area by increasing access to undeveloped waterfront open space.

This important area supports rare plants, is home to 35 species of fish and is a breeding area for wetland birds. It is also a resting place for migratory birds and a nesting place for shore birds.

The province contributed \$1.5 million for the land acquisition that I'm announcing today, and the purchase was undertaken in partnership with the town of Whitby, which contributed \$450,000. The local Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority will hold title to the land and will be responsible for its future management and preservation for the benefit of all Ontarians.

We will continue to work with our community partners to make sure the natural values and beauty of the Lynde Marsh will be here for the benefit and pleasure of future generations.

The Lynde Marsh is located in the heart of one of the most populous and rapidly developing areas in Canada, a fact that adds some urgency to our efforts. This government understands that urgency. It is one of the reasons we introduced the Greenbelt Protection Act last December. The greenbelt would be a permanent and sustainable legacy for future generations by providing a continuous

and connected system of open spaces across this landscape.

The Ministry of Natural Resources is proud to be a partner in protecting the Lynde Marsh and other important natural areas across this province. In doing so, we are strengthening our communities, our environment, our lakes and rivers, our fish and wildlife habitat, and our air and water quality, now and for the future.

TENANT PROTECTION

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors):

Today I would like to announce our intention to introduce a legislative amendment to the Tenant Protection Act, 1997. More specifically, we intend to propose suspending the automatic 2% base portion of the annual rent increase guideline formula of the Tenant Protection Act for rents in 2005. This proposed change is our government's first step toward creating a rental system that is fair to both tenants and landlords.

If the amendment is passed, the annual rent increase guideline formula for 2005 would be solely based on the rent control index. We believe the rent control index is a more accurate indicator of rising operational costs for landlords than the current calculation.

We recognize that the current guideline has been an ongoing source of friction between tenants and landlords. Tenants complained that the current formula bears no relation to landlords' operating costs. Landlords need to make a fair return on their properties.

We need time to look carefully at this issue before developing a long-term solution. That's why we intend to replace the Tenant Protection Act, 1997, with legislation that actually does what the title professes to do: protect tenants.

The legislation we plan to introduce in the fall, if passed, would provide balanced protection for landlords and tenants and encourage the growth and proper maintenance of rental housing across this great province of ours. It would include a solution to the annual rent increase guidelines and to other landlord-tenant issues. Issues like rent and utility costs: Why should tenants continue to pay higher rents if utility costs decline? Issues like the level of rents charged to new tenants: Should there be a ceiling placed on what landlords can charge to new tenants? Issues like interest paid on rent deposits: What interest rate should be applied to rent deposits? Is the current interest rate paid on rent deposits realistic, given the current economic conditions? These are but some of the areas where our government believes balance needs to be put back in the legislation.

Before we draft this proposed legislation, our government will go out and talk with and listen to the people who are affected most by the current legislation. We want to have open and frank discussions with groups and individuals about how to create a better piece of legislation. We intend to meet stakeholder groups, hold town hall meetings in communities with large rental housing

markets and gather views in a variety of ways: by phone, letter and through our Web site. The advice, ideas and opinions we hear will help us develop legislation that will provide fair and balanced protection for tenants and landlords. We plan to introduce new legislation in the fall of this year's legislative session.

Clean, decent and affordable housing is fundamental to the well-being, vitality and strength of families and the communities in which they live. No tenant should have to choose between paying the rent and paying for groceries. By strengthening the communities in which we live, we are providing Ontarians with a quality of life that is second to none. We believe the strategy we have laid out here today is a strategy for real, positive change. Our government, the McGuinty government, is confident that with the help of Ontarians we can create a rental system that better protects tenants and promotes a healthy private rental housing market for now and in the future.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): The last time that this Legislature, to my recollection, had a minister speaking with empathy for the working poor and the costs of tenancy, and who was herself a landlord, was Zanana Akande. Now we have a second time that a minister who is a noted landlord is here professing his empathy for tenants.

My first question to the minister, and he may wish to answer this to the media later, is: Did the minister declare a conflict of interest and withdraw from cabinet when this matter was before cabinet for consideration?

I think the most truthful statement made in the House today was the quote from the Toronto Star this morning that said, "The move is aimed at buying the government time." That is essentially what this is about. The move earlier this morning to eliminate the food tax potential in the upcoming budget was aimed at buying votes in the Hamilton East by-election. Frankly, we've got the most unusual situation, where we've got rent legislation that requires a public disclosure in August being announced in the House today, without legislation, five months early, and yet Ontarians have been waiting for six months, and now they're going to wait almost seven months, to get their first budget from this government, which will be two months late.

The truth of the matter is that Ontarians can recall in their not-too-distant past just how bad the Liberals' ill-fated promises of 1985 were and the actual bitter pill of legislation in Bill 51 they had to swallow in 1987. With all due respect to the Speaker—you were the minister at the time, and Zanana Akande was also the minister—you will recall that this legislation was so bad that it resulted in increases. In my riding of Burlington alone, we had an 85% increase under your legislation at 5170 Lakeshore Road, a 43% increase at 477 Elizabeth Street and the list goes on and on. The Residential Rent Regulation Act, if that's the model you're going to be following, will be bad news for tenants as well as bad news for landlords.

The minister did make a reference to his fellow landlords when he said very clearly in his statement, "Land-

lords need to make a fair return on their properties." Well, Minister, if that's what you're going to do—try to reach a more balanced approach—it raises the larger question of why your government's intervention for seniors and low-income tenants is reduced to a mere 2%.

1400

Here is your record to date: So far, your Treasurer cancelled income tax cuts last fall that put thousands more seniors and low-income Ontarians back on the provincial tax rolls for the first time. Secondly, your Treasurer gave municipalities the right to increase the municipal tax levy that's allocated to multiple-residential units, and you specifically went against past policies to help us reduce the associated costs that were passed directly through. So the 7% increase in our municipality could be a 12% or 15% increase for specific tenants in my riding.

Your seniors' property tax credit had a cash value of about \$475. Even at \$1,000 a month, the most they will realize out of this is \$240, and yet you eliminated the tax credit for seniors that would have put \$475 back into their pockets.

You broke your promise on hydro, and since electric heat is available in most apartment buildings in Ontario, you are going to find that those increases are going to go up 28%. What a deal. Today you announced that maybe you are going to roll back more than 2%, and yet you are increasing their utilities 28%.

The bottom line is that you've done nothing, really, to help tenants; you have actually hurt them with your policies, and you are expecting tenants to stand up and applaud for 2%.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):

With respect to the MNR announcement of taxpayers' money to expand protection for the provincially significant Lynde Marsh, it is surely a continuation of wetland protection programs of the previous PC government. The acquisition of land to add to the area of the marsh has been undertaken for many years by the Ministry of Natural Resources in partnership with community partners. My colleagues and I certainly understand the urgency of continuing the programs of the previous government. I will mention that in the year 2000, Minister John Snobelen made an announcement of \$331,000, in part for this same piece of property.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): Unlike the last couple of speakers, I stand up to actually applaud this government for reducing rents by 2% in the coming year. I believe that this is a good thing. I wish you had said this before, in the lead-up to the election, because your platform, quite frankly, said something different. You said you would not do this if the vacancy rates in any particular municipality went above 3%, as is the case today in Toronto, Hamilton and Ottawa.

Notwithstanding that, you have come to your senses, and I have to say that what you are saying today is a first step can only be applauded by the millions of Ontarians who are renters. The proof will be, though, in the future. What is the future legislation going to say? The 2% today is a good down payment, but you are talking about consultation across this entire province, consultation that you think is necessary to bring in new legislation. We already know, you already know and the Tories already know that thousands of families are being dispossessed; they're being kicked out of their rental units every month by a system that doesn't work. We already know that thousands of families cannot afford the rent they are paying in Ontario and through vacancy decontrols are being driven out of their homes.

We already know that there are 75,000 people in the city of Toronto alone who are on the waiting list for affordable housing—75,000 people who probably will never see an affordable unit in their lives because the waiting list is just too long. It's the same in virtually every city in this province.

You are going out and embarking upon a whole series of consultations and you are asking questions that I believe you should already know the answers to. You don't have to consult the landlords. You need to consult the millions of tenants in this province, and they will tell you the answers pretty fast. As to whether rents should be increased when there is a vacancy: Of course the rent shouldn't be increased when there is a vacancy, as the Tenant Protection Act allowed. All that did was allow rents to increase much faster than the rate of inflation. We know in this province that it has gone up 43% while inflation has only gone up 20% since the advent of this act.

You're asking whether or not the province should keep a list of former rents. Of course the province should keep a list of the former rents. The landlord is not going to tell people, and obviously new tenants aren't going to be able, in every case or even in the majority of cases, to find out who the previous tenant was in order to find out what rent was paid. So you already know the answer.

You're asking whether increases should be based on the costs the building actually has incurred. We know what has happened here in the past under the previous legislation put in by the Tories. When natural gas spiked in cost, every tenant in the province paid increased rents. When natural gas bottomed out, as it did a few weeks or months after that, not one cent was given back to the tenants in repayment. You already know that happened—the costs no longer borne.

The above-guideline increases are absolutely impossible if maintenance is to be increased. You already know that many of the buildings in the last four or five years have been improved. You already know the tenants have paid for that, and you don't have to pay for it again.

You have asked the question about dispute resolution. If ever there was an unfair example of the previous legislation it is there, where tenants are kicked out of their apartments on five days' notice, oftentimes when

they can't even read the form, when they don't understand it, when they have English as a second language. You know that has to be changed.

I am asking you to do the right thing. I am asking you to pass the legislation. I am asking you to introduce it and then take it out to the field. Take it out for improvements in what you're going to do. Don't do it the way you're doing it now.

I'm going to ask you about demolition and conversion. You know that demolition and conversion provisions need to be given to the cities. You know that this needs to be done. Just give it to them. Don't go out and ask that question. You have the opportunity to be a true friend to tenants. Be that friend; be it today.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): In the members' gallery we have a visitor, Mike Bradley, the mayor of Sarnia, and city manager Ann Tulpin. May we all welcome them to the assembly?

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent for a member from each party to speak for approximately five minutes in recognition of Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I rise today to recognize Yom Hashoah Ve Hagevurah, Holocaust Memorial Day, marking one of the worst crimes in history. This past Sunday, April 18, was designated for Holocaust remembrances in communities around the world. This is the sixth year that the Ontario Legislature has observed Holocaust Memorial Day. This practice was started with the passage of Bill 66 on December 10, 1998. I'm proud to say that Ontario was the first jurisdiction outside the state of Israel to officially recognize Holocaust Memorial Day.

On this day, Jews and non-Jews around the world come together to light candles and remember the six million Jews who were killed in the Holocaust and honour those who survived. We also remember the many others who were targeted by the Nazis for their race, religion, politics, disabilities and sexual orientation. It's important to set aside time to remember the victims whose lives were destroyed in Europe during the Nazi era between 1933 to 1945, and remember that we bear witness to what these men, women and children endured.

1410

Tragically, other genocides have followed since World War II in Cambodia, Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. Therefore, it is evident that we must continue our struggle to keep alive the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, approved by the United Nations

56 years ago in the shadow of the Holocaust. The declaration recognized the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace throughout the world. It called on the world to protect human rights by the rule of law.

It's been said so many times, and it bears repeating, that we are so fortunate to live in a country like Canada. But we must guard our democratic institutions and democratic freedoms, and we must appreciate, nurture and protect them. We must constantly remind ourselves how easy it is to lose them. Ontario is a unique society where people from all parts of the world are joined together to build a strong and prosperous province. We are working together to build a province where each and every one of us enjoys freedom from tyranny and fear. And we must be prepared to defend this freedom swiftly and with all the resources at our command.

Recently, there has been an upsurge in anti-Semitic acts across Canada and in Ontario. B'nai Brith Canada's League for Human Rights found that in the 21 years this group has been monitoring the problem, 2003 was a time when the highest number of anti-Semitic incidents occurred. During a two-week period starting in mid-March this year, the Jewish communities of Toronto and Vaughan experienced acts of vandalism involving swastikas painted on homes, schools and community signs, the breaking of stained-glass windows in a synagogue and the toppling of headstones in a cemetery. The recent firebombing of a Jewish school in Montreal is a further abominable reminder of the scourge of anti-Semitism. Once again, anti-Semitism has reared its ugly head. This time, however, we know what has to be done.

I am proud that in Ontario we have responded with swift and clear condemnation from all sectors of society. As Premier McGuinty told a Toronto rally on the evening of Wednesday, March 24, "Here we practice tolerance with one notable exception: Here there is zero tolerance for hate and those who would spread it." We must treat anti-Semitism and any form of hate as a cancer that must be eradicated.

In Ontario, we are proud of a collection of many ancestries, religions, histories, languages and cultures. People have come here from diverse parts of the world to create a better life for themselves and their families. Many Holocaust survivors are among those who now call Ontario home. This morning at a ceremony in the Legislature, Premier McGuinty and Ontario's Minister of Citizenship and Immigration awarded special certificates to 11 of these elderly Jewish Holocaust survivors who now reside in Ontario. These 11 individuals are present in the visitors' gallery today, and I'm delighted to welcome them here.

Our society has benefited immensely from their contributions and, most important of all, from their strong passion for life. They provide inspiration for all of us. But with the passage of time, there remain fewer and fewer survivors of the Holocaust. Without their presence among us, it might become very easy to forget the

horrors they faced. We must commit ourselves to never forget what happened to six million Jews who were murdered, simply because of their religion. We must strengthen the hope that no community will ever again experience such horrible acts. We must also continue our vigil against tyranny and those who inflict such atrocities on a group because of their race, religion, customs, politics or place of origin.

"Never again" is the pledge that must be inscribed in the hearts of Canadians and passed on to every succeeding generation. We must always remember, so that the world will never forget.

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): It's a privilege to be able to join all members of this House in recognizing Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Memorial Day.

It's always difficult to speak after the honourable minister has just spoken so eloquently. You need to know that each year you touch each one of us greatly, and we thank you for your sincere comments.

Holocaust Memorial Day is a day that commemorates the Holocaust and honours the six million Jews who were murdered during World War II, as well as those who survived, many of whom, we know, settled in Ontario.

On December 10, 1989, this Legislature passed Bill 66, in the name of my colleague the member for Halton. The bill proclaimed that we in Ontario would recognize Holocaust Memorial Day. We were the first jurisdiction outside the state of Israel to do so. This bill provided us with a further opportunity to reflect on the enduring lessons of the Holocaust and the enhancement of anti-discrimination education.

The acts of vandalism in a Jewish cemetery in my community of Kitchener earlier this month and the swastikas spray-painted in a Waterloo neighbourhood this past weekend, as well as similar anti-Semitic acts of violence and vandalism in our province in recent months, indicate that there remains a great need for anti-discrimination education. We do not know what motivated these cowardly actions, but what we do know is that they have caused tremendous pain, hurt and anger. As the Kitchener-Waterloo Record stated in today's edition, "The cruel ignorance that lies behind such vandalism begs for the enlightenment that can only come with education."

As a child of Dutch immigrants, I learned very early in life about World War II and the Holocaust and the atrocities that had been committed. As a former history teacher, I personally believed I had a responsibility to teach my students about the Holocaust and all that had happened during World War II. Through the study of the Holocaust, my students, and students today, are able to realize that their silence and their indifference to the suffering of others or the infringement of civil rights in any society can, however unintentional, serve to perpetuate the problems.

That is why it was so important that in response to the recent anti-Semitic acts of vandalism that people throughout this province and in my own community of Kitchener-Waterloo spoke out with a loud, united voice

to denounce and condemn these acts and to offer their support to their Jewish neighbours and friends.

We must never, ever weaken our resolve to express our outrage at these expressions of hate, because we must remember that many individuals, such as our Jewish friends and colleagues, my own family who immigrated here and millions of others from around this world, have come to this province and to this country because we know it to be a land of love, acceptance, tolerance and respect for one another. It is extremely important that we continue to speak out, because as time passes there remain fewer and fewer survivors, and without their presence it sometimes becomes easy to forget the horrors that these individuals have faced. We must not, and cannot ever, forget. We need to continue the vigil that we have undertaken. We need to ensure that there will never be another person or people who will have the power to inflict such unspeakable horrors and suffering on any group of human beings regardless of their race, their religion, their way of life or where they live.

By standing together today and every day in solidarity with our Jewish friends and neighbours, you and I can ensure a better tomorrow for all generations to come, not only in this province and this country, but our influence can be felt and is being felt throughout this world.

1420

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): The names of Bergen-Belsen, Auschwitz, Dachau and other Nazi concentration camps have been seared into our memories because of the unimaginable horror they represent. Between 1933 and 1945, over six million Jewish men, women and children were systematically murdered. Entire communities, villages, indeed entire generations of families were exterminated in the most brutal fashion, and this state-sponsored and -organized genocide also killed millions of others because of their race, their religion, their sexual orientation or the fact that they may have had a physical or mental handicap.

The suffering was terrible and the loss to society, the damage to human dignity, cannot be measured. That is why we must never forget what happened. That is why we must not allow ourselves to forget that the early warning signs of the persecution of Jews existed in 1935, 1936, 1937, but much of the world did nothing to oppose the persecution, and while tens of thousands of Jewish families tried to flee Nazi Germany, many countries closed their borders. Indeed, Canada essentially closed its borders.

History must serve as a reminder that we must always be on guard, that this cannot happen again and, sadly, the events that we've seen—Rwanda, Cambodia, Armenia—tell us that this can happen again if we are not on guard, that we must always speak out against anti-Semitism, against hate, against racism of any kind. It's why we must act decisively when the ugly realities of hate crimes and neo-Nazism resurface in present-day Ontario.

We must stand with Jewish Canadians and all victims of genocide against the hate-mongers and take swift action to put a stop to their racist actions, just as we

finally did 60 years ago, when it became impossible for the world to ignore what was happening, when Canadian soldiers and fliers helped to free the survivors of concentration camps and witnessed personally the destruction and the cruelty that happened there. Many of the Holocaust survivors who were freed from those concentration camps came to Canada, settled here in Ontario and have become wonderful members of society who have made incredible contributions to our community.

As I said, we must remember this and we must never forget how this happened. We must reflect on mankind's capacity for cruelty and terror, and we must also reflect on our capacity to triumph over it, to find the courage to be clear, to be firm. And we must reflect on the capacity that has been demonstrated in Ontario for people to build new lives and to help build a province and a country where all cultures, all religions and the rights of all people are respected and honoured.

This is an important day for all of us to reflect upon and for all of us to rededicate our efforts.

MEMBER'S CONDUCT

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Speaker, pursuant to standing order 21, I wish to raise a point of privilege.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I want to thank the member for Erie-Lincoln, who has provided me with written notice of his intention to raise this point of privilege. I am prepared to hear the member's point of privilege, but I first want to be very clear about this. The member for Erie-Lincoln will know that it is not appropriate for there to be any type of criticism of the Chair.

The member wants to make the argument that his privilege has been breached as the result of some sort of activity or event that has occurred. As I say, I am prepared to let him begin making his point; however, I fully expect the member to very directly indicate which of his privileges have been breached and how, and to ensure that his remarks do not stray into territory where the Chair is being questioned or criticized.

Mr Hudak: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I appreciate your points. Nothing in my remarks should be perceived as any kind of criticism of the Chair or decisions made from the chair. They are intended for the actions of a member not sitting in the chair.

Earlier today, pursuant to standing order 21, I submitted to the Speaker a point of privilege regarding what I believe to have been and to be a grave contempt against myself as a member and, more broadly, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario itself. Speaker, I beg your indulgence to make my submission to you and to members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I appreciate this opportunity to bring it to your attention as soon as possible.

Let me summarize my point of privilege. I felt that my rights as a member of the Legislative Assembly, as conferred by the standing orders and by parliamentary precedent, were threatened and indeed violated, which I will explain in some detail in a moment, on the action of

Wednesday, April 14, immediately after adjournment of the House, at 1805 of the clock according to Hansard. The incident of which I speak is a serious one, all the more serious considering the member in question also serves in another capacity as an officer of the House.

The member for Essex and Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, I submit, conducted himself in a manner which was wholly inappropriate and, more importantly, in violation of basic rights we all enjoy as members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. A direct threat and an attempt to intimidate were made by the member from Essex to me as a member immediately after he vacated the Speaker's chair at the conclusion of daily business. Upon retiring from the chamber floor, the member made gestures to me from behind and to the east of the chair, which I submit violate my basic rights as a member. To further the validity of my point, several members of the Legislature witnessed the member's threat and attempt to intimidate and may wish to similarly speak to this point. Furthermore, the threat and attempt to intimidate were recorded and broadcast to the public by the Legislative Assembly broadcast and recording service.

Let me be clear: Upon adjourning the assembly, vacating the chair and departing from the floor of the chamber, the member for Essex turned about two metres from the door to the Speaker's office, he faced the opposition benches and looked at me directly. He took two steps toward me and then began to make angry and highly agitated gestures directed at me, pointing at the floor behind the chair.

The meaning of these gestures is perfectly clear to me and will likely be very clear to other members of the assembly. The member for Essex was, as the expression goes, calling me out.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I need to hear the member's point of privilege without any interruption. I ask the member from Nepean-Carleton to come to order. I want to hear the member from Erie-Lincoln's point of privilege without any interruptions.

1430

Mr Hudak: Thank you, Mr Speaker. To repeat, the member of Essex was, as the expression goes, calling me out. It was clear, by his angry and animated gestures and by his facial expression, that the member for Essex either wanted to get in a heated confrontation with me behind the Chair or, worse yet, engage in a physical altercation. After the member for Essex repeated the gestures a second time, the Sergeant at Arms captured his attention, spoke with him and escorted him into the Speaker's office.

A physical altercation with another member of the assembly, particularly one still wearing the robes of the Deputy Speaker, obviously is not something in which I was interested. Nonetheless, the member for Essex's intent was obvious. He was threatening me and attempting to intimidate me as a member of the assembly.

There are a number of arguments that I intend to make. First, I intend to show that my rights as a member

of the assembly were violated by the threat and attempt to intimidate by the member for Essex.

Second, I will seek a ruling on whether the member from Essex violated the rights enjoyed by all members of the assembly, therefore forfeiting his right to sit in judgment of the actions of members in this House or in his role as Deputy Speaker. I will submit to you that a *prima facie* case of contempt exists and that therefore the House consider the removal of the member for Essex from his position as Deputy Speaker as a result of what I allege to be his misconduct as an ordinary member of the assembly; that a proper election be held for the position of Deputy Speaker as per standing order 4(a).

Many relevant authorities currently exist which pertain to the question of parliamentary privilege as it applies to members and their conduct in the Legislative Assembly. Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, 6th edition, 1989, uses Sir Erskine May's definition of privilege as follows: "The privileges of Parliament are rights which are 'absolutely necessary for the due execution of its powers.' They are enjoyed by individual members, because the House cannot perform its functions without unimpeded use of the services of its members; and by each House for the protection of its members and the vindication of its own authority and dignity."

Furthermore, Beauchesne makes references on page 12 to Speaker Lamoureux's 1971 ruling in the House of Commons whereby he defines parliamentary privilege as follows: "Privilege does not go much beyond the right of free speech in the House of Commons and the right of a member to discharge his duties in the House as a member of the House of Commons."

More specifically, Ontario's Legislative Assembly Act, which guides all aspects of the House in Ontario, speaks to the issue of jurisdiction of the assembly to determine and rule on issues of contempt. Paragraph 2 of subsection 46(1) of the act deals with the issue of threats against members, specifically saying:

"The assembly has all the rights and privileges of a court of record for the purposes of summarily inquiring into and punishing, as breaches of privilege or as contempts ... the acts, matters and things following:

"Obstructing, threatening or attempting to force or intimidate a member of the assembly."

Further, Erskine May, 22nd edition, 1997, remarks specifically on the validity of a concern related on the obstruction of members and their discharge of duty as members. I refer you to page 121 of that text, where it says, "It is a contempt to molest a member of either House while attending the House, or coming to or going from it." Erskine May continues, "Members and others have been punished for such molestation occurring within the precincts of the House, whether by assault or insulting or abusive language, or outside the precincts."

Page 123 of Erskine May speaks specifically to the point I raise: "To attempt to intimidate a member in his parliamentary conduct by threats is also a contempt." Further, page 25 of Beauchesne's speaks to the point of intimidation where he says, "It is generally accepted that

any threat, or attempt to influence the vote of, or actions of a member, is a breach of privilege.”

It is from these passages that we, as members of the Legislative Assembly in the British parliamentary tradition, derive the convention of what our privileges are as it relates to the freedom we are assured in performing our duties as representatives of the people. I submit as vigorously as I can that the threat by the member from Essex, if not a challenge to engage in a physical altercation, was indeed at the very least an act of intimidation, which stands in violation of my privilege as a member of this House, and that further the House has a duty to rule on this serious charge.

Perhaps more fundamental to this argument is the question of whether the member from Essex, through his actions as an ordinary member, violated a basic condition of his role as Deputy Speaker. His role as Deputy Speaker is referenced in the standing orders. Standing order 13(a) states that “the Speaker shall preserve order and decorum.”

Furthermore, Erskine May's *Parliamentary Practice* states that, “The Speaker of the House of Commons is the representative of the House itself in its powers, proceedings and dignity. The Speaker's functions fall into two main categories. On the one hand the Speaker is the spokesman or representative of the House in its relations with the crown ... and other authorities.... On the other hand the Speaker presides over the debates of the House of Commons and enforces the observance of all rules for preserving order in its proceedings.”

I would argue that the actions of the member from Essex on Wednesday afternoon violated the standing orders in this place and stood against the generally accepted notion subscribed to in our parliamentary system that the Speaker is to be the enforcer of rules and order in the assembly. Certainly members must be able to reasonably expect the Deputy Speaker to exercise his or her duties in accordance with long-standing rules of the House. I submit that the member from Essex himself, as an ordinary member, acted in contempt of the privileges that all members enjoy, and has therefore forfeited his right to stand in judgment of both the proceedings of the assembly and the actions of its members in his role as Deputy Speaker.

We all know that an important role of the Speaker is to ensure that the rights of members are protected, particularly the rights of opposition members. Because of the threat and intimidation visited upon me in his capacity as an individual member while he was still wearing the robes of Deputy Speaker, I have great concern about his ability to respect and protect my rights in his capacity as Deputy Speaker.

I want to be clear on this point: I am in no way reflecting on the character or the impartiality of the member from Essex in his role as Deputy Speaker or his decisions from the chair. The point of privilege refers to the actions taken by the member as an ordinary member of the assembly against me personally after he had vacated the chair and the House was adjourned. I do,

however, feel that a *prima facie* case of contempt exists concerning the member from Essex's conduct toward me in the House, and that because of his actions he is unfit to sit in judgment of the members of the assembly.

More broadly, Joseph Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, second edition, offers a definition of contempt in the Canadian parliamentary tradition: “Contempt is more aptly described as an offence against the authority and the dignity of the House.” That's on page 225.

I submit to you that the dignity of the House has been violated by the actions of the member from Essex last Wednesday afternoon. I can attest that I have laid before you all of the relevant information and facts as I understand them. I would ask that you rule that a *prima facie* case of contempt exists in this case. Further, I submit a motion in the House seeking the removal of the member from Essex from his position as Deputy Speaker due to his contemptible threats and intimidation toward me, and that an election for the position of Deputy Speaker take place accordingly.

As a supplementary point on the timing of bringing forward the motion, Beauchesne states that “A question of privilege must be brought to the attention of the House at the first possible opportunity.” Even a gap of a few days may invalidate the claim for precedence in the House. I think you're well aware of that, Mr Speaker.

The reason for bringing it forward today is that I had my staff request from Broadcast and Recording Service a copy of the videotape of the daily proceedings from Wednesday, April 14. My office received a copy and reviewed that copy over the weekend. Over the course of the business day on Monday and today, I had a chance to consult with other members of the assembly and other parties with respect to the incident—hence the short delay in bringing this motion to your attention. I'd be pleased to present as well a copy of the videotape for your personal review.

I thank you very much for your attention to this, Mr Speaker.

1440

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): Mr Speaker, further to this point of privilege, I'd like to address the conduct of the member for Essex, the Deputy Speaker, on the evening of April 14.

I was in the Legislature that evening and witnessed the incident in question. I sit near the chair, as you know, and it was clear to me, as he left the chair, that he was intimidating and appeared to be trying to start an altercation with the member for Erie-Lincoln.

From time to time in this Legislature, discussions do get heated. However, most members know where to draw the line. Calling on another to engage outside the House or behind the chair not only crosses the line, as we indicated today, but contravenes the rules of the Legislature. I believe my colleague from Erie-Lincoln has outlined the specific rules that have been breached here.

To put it in the most plain language, the Deputy Speaker, regardless of who that may be or what party

they serve in, should be an impartial referee. If discussions become too heated, the Deputy Speaker should be stern but, with a calm voice, return order to this Legislature, or to a standing committee for that matter. I've chaired standing committees for eight and a half years, and a standing committee Chair or a Speaker should not add fuel to the fire or allow political affiliation to drive their actions.

Like all referees, at times the Speaker's decisions will not be appreciated by those involved. Like a referee, the Speaker has the ability to reprimand those who unjustifiably question his rulings. I will note that this did not occur on the evening of April 14. The fact is that the member from Essex, the Deputy Speaker, instead chose to instigate what appeared to be a confrontation, and the actions taken by the member from Essex were caught on tape. These are unacceptable actions, unbecoming of a member of the Legislature, and crossed the line, and I hope that this type of action will not be condoned in this House.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Mindful of the time, I'm also mindful of the points which have been raised already. I do, however, want to address a few matters in this regard.

I've read Maingot—in fact the reference is at page 253—I have no intention of being disparaging of the Speaker, nor of referring to any impartiality on the part of the Speaker during the course of these comments. I understand the law, if you will, in that regard.

The first question, of course, is: Can a Speaker, can an officer of the court, be in contempt of the Parliament? I was here. I was present on the afternoon of April 14, and present during the period of time immediately before the adjournment of the House and immediately after the adjournment of the House, when the conduct complained of occurred. I found it remarkable and also interesting, as I say, from the point of view of, first, can a Speaker be in contempt?

Taking a look at Erskine May, you find that Erskine May, at page 121—and I'm referring to the 21st edition—very specifically speaks of misconduct by officers: the Sergeant at Arms, according to Erskine May, has been found in contempt of legislatures, among others; an officer of the House of Lords; the Hansard personnel. I looked in Griffith and Ryle and indeed found that a Speaker may be in contempt of the Parliament.

While it is not a common occurrence, I refer to the House of Commons Journal of 1694 in Britain and found that their Speaker, Sir John Trevor, having received a gratuity of 10,000 guineas from the city of London after passing the orphans bill, was expelled from the House.

So I put it to you that although the law may not have been applied frequently, the law is very clear, first, that a Speaker can be found in contempt of the Legislature, of the Parliament. That, I believe, addresses that first consideration.

The second one goes to privileges. Look, we know that privileges are exhaustive. We know that, effectively, the list of privileges is complete. It's finite. However,

when you take a look at, among others, Maingot, you discover that privileges blur with the issue of contempt. We find, among other things, that contempt is whatever a House finds as contempt—in itself, a simplistic observation, but nonetheless an accurate reflection of the state of the law. I'm referring to Maingot at page 229.

Specifically, the author writes that another category “relates to matters of contempt that are not a breach of any enumerated right.” That's what I spoke to when I spoke of the exhaustive list of privileges: an enumerated right. It furthermore speaks of any act or omission. It's clear that a contempt doesn't have to be words. It's clear that a contempt can be conduct. In fact, the Ontario Court of Appeal decision of the Queen and Kopyto, which many in this Legislature will recall, made it very clear in determining contempt in terms of a judicial context. It spoke very clearly about contempt being not just words but actions as well.

Amongst the things that Maingot says can constitute contempt, because they are a violation of the entitlements, at the very least, of members, is that “Members are entitled to go about their parliamentary business undisturbed. The assaulting, menacing and insulting of any member on the floor of the House, or while he is coming or going to or from the House, or on account of his behaviour”—I want you to pay special attention to this—“during a proceeding in Parliament, is a violation of the rights of Parliament.”

What happened on this afternoon is that the Conservative caucus, and I think it was as obvious as could be, made a political gesture in the course of engaging in the vote on the non-confidence motion that had been filed by them. Whether or not their conduct was out of order had not been ruled upon. I have no doubt that there was conduct, because it was conduct that attracted the attention of myself, of every member of this caucus and, I suspect, might even have attracted some of the attention of the press gallery and clearly attracted the attention of the Speaker. But Maingot makes it clear that menacing behaviour that is a response to conduct is, in and of itself, a contempt.

Go further and look at Erskine May. You've heard reference from the member for Erie-Lincoln. At page 126, Erskine May very clearly speaks of “the molestation of members on account of their conduct in Parliament is also a contempt.” That appears to be specific and complete.

Take a look at Marleau and Montpetit, in particular at page 67: “There are, however, other affronts against the dignity and authority of Parliament which may not fall within one of the specifically defined privileges.” This goes back to my first comment about how the list of privileges is exhaustive. “The House ... claims the right to punish, as a contempt, any action which, though not a breach of a specific privilege, tends to obstruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions; obstructs or impedes any member or officer of the House in the discharge of their duties”—and this is the imperative and compelling part of this statement—“or is an offence against the authority or dignity of the House, such as

disobedience of its legitimate commands or libels upon itself, its members, or its officers.”

Contempt, as opposed to privileges, cannot be enumerated or categorized. As Speaker Sauvé explained, “While our privileges are defined, contempt of the House has no limits. When new ways are found to interfere with our proceedings, so too will the House, in appropriate cases, be able to find that a contempt of the House has occurred.”

Words or acts can be committed—that is to say, a contempt can be committed—by an officer of the assembly, including a Speaker. But I ask the court to also take into consideration section 31 of the Criminal Code of Canada. This is not a trivial matter. In fact, the intimidation of a Legislature or a Parliament is a serious criminal offence. And I don’t suggest that here we have a violation of criminal law. I raise section 31 of the Criminal Code to point out to you how seriously the authorities consider the intimidation of a Parliament and that it doesn’t require on a *de facto* intimidation but on the act itself.

1450

In closing, I go to Griffith and Ryle and some observations about the role of the Speaker. I put to you that the conduct complained of here—and at this point, I want to confirm the statement made by the member for Erie-Lincoln and his colleague as to what the conduct consisted of. Clearly, the Speaker was angry. When he made his brief comments to the House prior to the adjournment of the House, the tape will show you a person who is livid, who is shaking with anger. Look, I’ve seen Speakers tested before. I have probably tested a few myself. I understand a Speaker being—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr Kormos: I understand a Speaker being displeased with the conduct of members of the assembly. I also know that we place in the hands of our Speakers a great deal of responsibility; that is, this place is a clearly partisan place where people are going to engage in partisan activity and partisan thrust and parry, and people are going to be attempting to express their displeasure in any number of ways that they consider creative from time to time. I recall one incident where a member of the then-opposition held the business of this House up at least overnight, and well into 24 hours. The cameras and the spotlights, while the House was brought to silence, focused on that member as he obstructed the ongoing activities of the House. It may not have been in order and it was a parliamentary ruse that may have displeased the Speaker, but it did not draw anger.

I put to you that the comments in Griffith and Ryle about the Speaker are most revealing. On page 213, “Behind the scenes the Speaker can exercise considerable informal influence.” Amongst other things, “The Speaker can also seek to cool passions.” That’s what we call upon the Speaker to do.

I refer to that fascinating and valuable text by Rod Lewis, *The House Was My Home*, and these are my final comments:

“Probably the most important requirement for a good Speaker is a sense of humour. A Speaker with this asset will often be able to defuse a tense situation by a quip that brings a laugh to the House. This lightens the mood of the House and enables the Speaker to keep better control. A Speaker who lacks this attribute and perhaps takes himself too seriously will always run into difficulties.”

Sir, I observed a Speaker lose his temper, and demonstrate his anger, I observed a Speaker in his address to the Legislature prior to adjourning literally shake with anger and then I saw that Speaker, after leaving the chair, turn when he was to your right, sir, to the member for Erie-Lincoln and, in a gesture that I am, oh, too familiar with, going back to the very earliest of school days, saw the Speaker angrily gesture toward the ground in front of him with the clear body language that communicates, “Over here, pal. I’ll take you on right here and now.”

I say to you, that behaviour on the part of a member is contemptuous and that behaviour on the part of a Speaker warrants a finding of *prima facie* contempt and the opportunity for this House to determine whether or not, in fact, it constitutes a contempt.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I’m pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the point of privilege that was raised by the member for Erie-Lincoln. I think, as I begin my response, I want to reflect on the definition of privilege for you, relate that privilege to what allegedly occurred in the House and then review the alleged behaviour in the context, not only of the rules of privilege, but the rules of the House. I think it is a serious matter for your consideration.

First of all, with respect to privilege, I want to be sure that we look at the different types of privileges that can be impinged upon. I should also note that the member stood initially on a point of privilege and then moved into contempt of the House, and they are two different things. I’ll talk about that as I deal with these issues at greater length moving on.

The classic definition of parliamentary privilege is found in Erskine May’s *Treatise on the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usages of Parliament*. Here is the definition:

“Parliamentary privilege is the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively ... and by members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions, and which exceed those possessed by other bodies or individuals. Thus privilege, though part of the law of the land, is to a certain extent an exemption from the general law.”

These peculiar rights can be broken down into two categories of rights: members individually and then members collectively. Members individually have the privilege of freedom of speech, the freedom from arrest and civil actions, exemption from jury duty, exemption from attendance as a witness.

The rights and powers of a House as a collectivity can be categorized in the following ways: the power to

discipline, that is the right to punish persons guilty of breaches of privilege or contempts and the power to expel members guilty of disgraceful conduct; the regulation of its own internal affairs; the authority to maintain the attendance and service of its members; the right to institute inquiries and to call witnesses and demand papers; the right to administer oaths to witnesses; the right to publish papers containing defamatory material.

"The House has the authority to invoke privilege where its ability has been obstructed in the execution of its functions or where members have been obstructed in the performance of their duties. It is only within this context that privilege can be considered an exemption from the general law. Members are not outside or above the law which governs all citizens of Canada. The privileges of the Commons are designed to safeguard the rights of each and every elector."

We have before us a point that relates to whether or not the member was intimidated or impeded from performing his duties. Mr Speaker was not in the House on the day the alleged incident occurred, and I would like to take a moment to review the Hansard from that particular afternoon. I'm looking at Hansard, page 1511, April 14, 2004. The Deputy Speaker called a 10-minute bell at 5:50 in the afternoon. When the bell concluded, the Deputy Speaker then said, "All those in favour will stand one at a time and be recognized by the Chair." The Clerk of the House declared that the motion had been lost. The Deputy Speaker then said, "I declare the motion lost," and went on to say:

"Before I adjourn the House, and after the vote, I want to express an opinion from the Chair. Something happened today that I haven't seen in 10 years in this place. I don't know who led it, but Mr Runciman, it was your motion. You know from all of your experience that this should not have happened. Any of you sitting with these T-shirts on who has an ounce of respect for this place wouldn't have worn them. The next time something like this happens," and then at that point, a member on the opposite side was called to order.

I should point out that the view of the members on this side is that a number of members were screaming quite loudly at the Deputy Speaker, including the member who has raised the point. A number of us will testify to that in this House today. They were using strong, offensive language to the Speaker, foul language to Parliament, language that should have been found out of order. Frankly, at that point in time, we were contemplating a point of order and chose not to because we didn't want to interfere with the right of members to vote.

I think it has to be put into a further context. The members opposite came into the chamber for a vote sporting a T-shirt that had a political statement on it. That raises the question of the behaviour of the members opposite and whether or not that showed contempt of Parliament or disrespect to the Speaker or to the Chair.

I'd like to take a moment to reflect on order and decorum in the House, and I'll refer you, Mr Speaker, as you contemplate your ruling, to page 503 of Marleau and

Montpetit, where we have a fairly good definition to begin with, speaking on the rules of order and decorum:

"One of the basic principles of parliamentary procedures is that proceedings in the House ... are conducted in terms of a free and civil discourse. In order that debate on matters of public policy be held in a civil manner, the House has adopted rules of order and decorum for the conduct of members towards each other and towards the institution as a whole." That's an important definition, and it's further refined with respect to the Speaker. It says, "The Speaker is charged with maintaining order in the chamber by ensuring that the House's rules and practices are respected."

1500

I would argue that the first contempt occurred that afternoon when the members, sporting T-shirts bearing a political message, attempted to obstruct the operation of the House. That was clearly recorded in the media subsequent to the debate in the House.

Ultimately, "while it is the Speaker who is charged with maintaining the dignity and decorum of the House, members themselves must take responsibility for their behaviour and conduct their business in an appropriate fashion."

What started with a little prank wearing T-shirts degenerated into the member for Erie-Lincoln's screaming at the Deputy Speaker. Again, a number of us on this side of the House will testify to that. We will provide you written confirmation that the member's behaviour was contemptuous of this House and particularly of the Chair and the member ought to be cited for that behaviour.

Let's talk about our relevant authority, because none of these folks have spoken about relevant authorities. I would like to refer you, Mr Speaker, to standing order 13(a): "The Speaker shall preserve order and decorum, and shall decide questions of privilege and points of order. In making a decision on a question of privilege or point of order or explaining a practice, the Speaker may state the applicable standing order or authority."

The Speaker, in drawing the attention of members to the inappropriate behaviour, was fulfilling his obligation as Speaker. The member opposite was yelling at him at the top of his voice, suggesting that he did not have an authority to cite. The Speaker did not recognize the yelling and adjourned the House, quite appropriately.

We've talked about the incident. There are further rulings on the display of props. This is important, because it is important for the Speaker to understand the context of the House when the member from Erie-Lincoln verbally assaulted the Speaker. We on this side believe the Speaker's authority was threatened and challenged. The only member cited in the actual Hansard was another member on that side. The behaviour was not only contemptuous, it was, in our view, positively juvenile, watching it happen, particularly in the context that the Speaker had shown remarkable patience in allowing the members opposite to wear T-shirts into the House.

Mr Speaker, I will remind you that that very week—in fact it may have been that very day—the member who

showed such peculiar behaviour and contempt of the Speaker met with you in your chamber, where you very clearly defined what is and is not a prop. That act in and of itself was a contempt of the Chair, in my view. That meeting was set up at the request of his House leader in order to clarify the issue around the use of props. Let us talk about what you cited. The Speaker defined a prop as anything that is considered flashy or calling to the attention of the media. By the fact that members opposite marched into the Legislature together as the bell stopped ringing, it was clear that their intention was to use their T-shirts as a prop—very clear, and a very interesting tactic. The Speaker of the day, in my view, was offended and stood up to defend the institution and the rules which those members agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker, the member for Essex, in my view, showed an appropriate level of concern for the propriety of this institution and the intelligence of all members, which was threatened by rather juvenile behaviour related to T-shirts.

The member from Erie-Lincoln neglected to review any of the decisions with respect to decorum during voting, and there is a long history of that because—

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Decorum during voting? Tell us about decorum during voting.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Duncan: There is terrible grief on the other side—one can see that—and they're still in the anger phase of their grief.

Mr Speaker, as you reflect on your ruling, let me remind you of the relevant authorities dealing with decorum during votes. During the taking of a vote, no member is permitted to enter, walk out of or cross the House, or make any noise or disturbance from the time the Speaker begins to put the question until the results of the vote are announced. "Members must be in their seats to vote, and must remain seated until the result of the vote is announced." That comes from the Journals of Debate, federal House, February 16, 1976.

Mr Baird: Tell us about Javex bottles.

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): Speaking of juvenile.

Hon Mr Duncan: We are discussing juvenile behaviour in the House. The member for Nepean-Carleton, Mr Speaker, makes it difficult for me to continue. I'm trying my best. I listened very carefully. I listened carefully and attentively—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Could we get back to the point of privilege and allow the member to make his point? I'm getting shouting across the place here, and I don't need to be warning people about this. It is rather surprising that we're talking about privileges and a lot of privileges are being violated right now, not allowing someone to make their point. Thank you.

Hon Mr Duncan: As is the rule in the House, during a recorded division "no member may enter the committee of the whole while a division is in progress."

On one occasion, the Speaker interrupted the calling of a vote to request that a leader of an opposition party

remove a prop because of the disorder it was creating in the chamber. Your reference there, Mr Speaker, is debates of the House of Commons, June 22, 1995, page 14466.

That is significant, because I would submit that not only was the member defending the right of this House to conduct a vote, the member showed great patience in allowing the vote to go ahead while the juvenile tactic of wearing T-shirts, in what was clearly a stunt, was allowed to go ahead.

So with respect to whether or not the member's behaviour was inappropriate or somehow too strong, I would submit that the member demonstrated great patience. He allowed the members to enter the House. He allowed the members to take their seats. One by one they came in. The Speaker then called the vote at the appropriate time. The Speaker then allowed the vote to proceed. The vote was conducted, the vote was taken, the vote was recorded and the House properly adjourned.

I would submit that the record until that point shows very clearly that the Speaker acted appropriately in defending this institution and defending the rules that the members opposite voted for, but he also showed great patience in not calling the members, who clearly had props on, out of order at the time they were out of order. I believe he was taking his cue from you, Mr Speaker. You have shown much greater flexibility than past Speakers have with respect to a certain number of items, and I suspect the member saw it as more important to allow the member to exercise his right to vote than to criticize the fact that the member, who is now alleging his privileges were being abused, was in fact abusing the privileges not only of this Parliament but of the people who sent us here.

1510

A number of issues have been raised, both by the member for Erie-Lincoln and by the member for Niagara Centre. The first issue is the alleged incident or contempt or privilege—they haven't defined—and, by the way, we should review what contempt versus privilege is. I was on the opposition side, and oftentimes the opposition tries to use contempt. It's sort of a catch-all. If you don't really have a good case, you rely on contempt because it gives the Speaker much broader authority to find a problem. Most Speakers, however, recognize that for what it is. Let me talk to you about contempt, because the opposition put the issue of contempt on the floor.

The House also claims the right to punish as a contempt "any action which, though not a breach of a specific privilege...." That's important, because that's sort of the catch-all. There was no privilege violated. No member was obstructed from doing his duty. No member was obstructed from voting. No member was intimidated, except, we would suggest, the Speaker, by the member through his behaviour, his threatening gestures, his yelling and his refusal to obey the rules of the House. That's who was intimidating. It was not the Deputy Speaker, with all due respect. It was a shameful display, and a number of us will be submitting in writing what we

witnessed and what we heard from that member. That member was yelling at the top of his lungs.

"Though not a breach of a specific privilege, tends to obstruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions"—the Deputy Speaker made sure the House proceeded, made sure the House did its functions, and made sure the House would be called back the next day. He followed the rules. A review of Hansard will show that very clearly, and I reviewed the precise wording.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Duncan: I would remind the member from Riverdale that the opposition raised the point of privilege and we're simply responding.

"The rationale of the power to punish contempts, whether contempt of the court or contempt of the Houses, is that the courts and the two Houses should be able to protect themselves from acts which directly or indirectly impede them in the performance of their functions.' In that sense, all breaches of privilege are contempts of the House, but not all contempts are necessarily breaches of privilege."

That is significant, because neither opposition party was prepared to focus on the issue of privilege versus contempt. So they did what they wanted to do because they have no case; that is, they tried to establish a contempt.

Members on this side of the House witnessed what was described "after adjournment"—and that is a quote; I don't have Hansard—by the member opposite. We did not witness anything that we felt was other than a Speaker duly concerned about the legitimate functioning of this House. What we saw was offensive, childish behaviour that started with the wearing of T-shirts and resulted in the member from Erie-Lincoln attempting to intimidate the Speaker of the House.

He hides behind what happened after the House adjourned, because the problem he has with his argument is that if you look at Hansard and review the transcript, you will see that not only did the Deputy Speaker act appropriately, he tried to correct members in terms of what is and isn't appropriate in this chamber as part of debate. He adjourned the House appropriately. And then somehow, because he was defending this institution, defending himself from a verbal attack from the member, he is now alleged, with some pictures, I guess—we haven't seen them—that verify this.

We will submit to you, Mr Speaker, that those of us on this side of the House witnessed, first, a Deputy Speaker of enormous integrity who stood on his feet and protected this institution from childish props being brought in, props that clearly violated the rules that that party agreed to; second, a Speaker who properly adjourned the House according to the rules; a Speaker who defended this institution with the passion that it ought to be defended with from the childish antics that occurred and the contempt that was brought upon this House by the member for Erie-Lincoln, who, we on this side will say, attempted to intimidate the Speaker as he left the chair.

This side of the House, and any respectful member, knows that the member from Essex, the Deputy Speaker,

acted in the best interests of this House, did not attempt to intimidate or influence the behaviour of any member of this House and in fact was himself the subject of a childish verbal tirade from the member for Erie-Lincoln, who should in fact be the one found in contempt, based on the violation of the rules that they perpetrated deliberately and without cause, without thought with respect to what would happen to this great institution.

The Speaker: I want to thank all the members for their presentations. I will take all that you have said under consideration and come back with a ruling. I appreciate very much what was said. I do take this very seriously, and I hope you all do the same.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Premier: In coffee shops and diners across this province, taxpayers fought back and said no to your ill-conceived, wrong-headed McGuinty soup-and-salad tax. In diners, they signed thousands of petitions and faxed them in to your office and to members' offices. In coffee shops, taxpayers rose up, they rolled up the rim and they won. You had to back down on the McGuinty soup-and-salad tax. This was nothing but a shameless \$200-million tax grab. Premier, will you now apologize to working families in the province of Ontario for trying to pick their pockets with this ill-conceived tax hike?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I am proud to say that we have enlisted the restaurant industry in our cause to bring healthier food choices to the people of Ontario, particularly our children. We're pleased—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. It's passing strange that we have just had a discussion on privileges, and the member's privileges are being eroded here immediately. I would like to hear the Premier's response to the question.

Hon Mr McGuinty: I'm very pleased to have had the opportunity to meet with representatives of the restaurant industry. It became very clear as a result of that meeting, and from hearing from others throughout the province, that we were not about to achieve our policy objective, which was to ensure that we were bringing to Ontario families, but especially to young people, healthier food choices. What we will now be doing, with the restaurant association as our partner, is putting together a plan to bring those healthier food choices to all Ontarians.

1520

Mr Hudak: That has to be the most bizarre last-minute spin I've heard in my nine years here in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Maybe the member has to go back to Bill Clinton's spin doctors in Chicago to come up with better lessons.

Plain and clear, the Premier got caught red-handed trying to raise taxes on seniors and working families in the province of Ontario. We all remember: You looked taxpayers in the eye, through our TV screens, and said, "I'm not going to raise your taxes." I didn't see that you had your fingers crossed. I didn't see any kind of asterisk there. You said that you would not raise taxes.

You've backed down on one try. Let's be clear: no more prevarication. Let's hear the straight goods. Are you going to raise taxes on the people of Ontario?

Hon Mr McGuinty: There is no doubt whatsoever that—and there's objective polling that confirms this—people are very concerned with the state of our financial affairs as a result of the negligence and mismanagement on the part of the previous government. I can assure you that one of the things that we're going to be doing, through this budget, which my friends anxiously await, is getting better results for the people of Ontario, whether that's better academic achievement for our students, shorter wait times when it comes to health care or whether it happens to do with healthier food choices for children in Ontario.

Mr Hudak: We've been hearing the same line these past six months. That dog don't hunt no more. Your popularity has plummeted 11% in the latest poll. More Ontarians disapprove of their Premier's performance than approve, which is shocking at this point in your mandate.

Let me tell you why you've gone down so much in the polls: You regularly break your promises, you tried to get away with a \$200-million shameless tax grab and your tax-and-spend policies and tendencies are starting to make Bob Rae look like an amateur.

Tell us right now, and tell us straight out. Don't dodge the question, don't prevaricate, don't duck. Be straight up. Can we read your lips: no new taxes?

The Speaker: Order. That's the second time you've used that word. I'd ask you to withdraw it.

Mr Hudak: I withdraw.

Hon Mr McGuinty: We will not shy away from doing what we believe to be the responsible thing to do, given our financial circumstances. We are going to proceed to deliver on our commitments. We're going to avail ourselves of the necessary resources in order to get the job done. We're going to balance the budget in a responsible way. We will not be shy, we will not be ashamed, with respect to the kind of agenda we're going to put before the people of Ontario by means of our budget. I can't tell you how proud I am and how much I'm looking forward to placing our budgetary agenda before the people of Ontario.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a question for the Minister of Finance. During the recent election campaign in October, you committed to freeze, and then reduce, auto insurance rates. Yesterday in the House, you clearly stated, "Insurance premiums started to go down the day ... our government was elected."

Ontario residents are renewing their auto insurance and not enjoying reductions. I'd like to quote from a letter I received from a constituent of mine: "I'm 22 years old.... I have had no accidents, no speeding tickets and I have never lost any demerit points. My driving record is clean...."

"I work as a mechanic making \$10 an hour...."

"I was paying \$3,840 a year, which included collision.... They, without notice, are raising it to \$6,700 per year, which is \$555 a month." That's for a June renewal.

"Insurance companies are driving young, talented people out of the north."

Minister, why are my constituents not enjoying the promised 10% reduction in auto insurance rates now, six months after you were elected?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): Let's just do a little bit of history first. In the fourth quarter of 2002, rates under the Progressive Conservatives went up 9.2%; in the first quarter of 2003, a 7.3% rate increase; in the second quarter of 2003, an 8.5% increase; in the third quarter of 2003, an 8.2% increase.

Let's go to the April 15 filings by insurance companies representing 55% of the market. Allstate Insurance Company of Canada: 4% of the market share; filing effective June 15. Filed on April 15: approved rate change down 11.9%. Aviva insurance company, representing 1.9%: a rate reduction of 10.15%. Let's take another one. Chubb Group of Insurance Companies, representing almost 0.5% of the industry, filed on April 15: 10.5%.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary, the member for Nepean-Carleton.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I say to the Minister of Finance: People across Ontario are frustrated because the promises that you and your party made during the election campaign were simple, the expectations you raised were clear and you didn't meet them.

You and every Liberal MPP promised that within 90 days of your election, auto insurance premiums in the province of Ontario would be cut by 10%. Check out MPP Khalil Ramal's campaign Web site when you leave question period. Look at what it says—it's still up: "Within 90 days of taking office," the Liberals will "require insurance companies to cut premiums by an average of 10%"—not cut the rate of increase by 10% or moderate them.

Would you just stand in your place and admit to the people of Ontario that you've broken another campaign promise? Will you do the right thing and bring back the three regulations that the Tory government implemented that would actually work for rate increases in the province of Ontario? Would you do that?

Hon Mr Sorbara: Did he really say, "Bring back Tory policy"? Three straight years of rate increases? Let's go back to the list. Guarantee Company of North America: rate reductions of 11.2%. Hartford Fire Insurance Company: rate reductions of 10%. ING insurance company, representing 7.84% of the market: a rate reduction of 12.4%.

We did this in the time that we said we were going to do it. As a result of these initiatives, insurance premiums in the province of Ontario are now starting to decline. I tell my friend, as we bring forward the next series of reforms to this system, premiums will go down further and the product that drivers get in this province will be far better.

Mr Baird: This is the kind of double-speak that even has Liberals shaking their heads. You were very clear during the election campaign, you were very clear, when you introduced your auto insurance policy last June, that rates would be cut by 10%.

You stand in your place, you're glib and you don't understand that your policies are having real effects on working families in Ontario. My colleague recognized a member from his constituency, who is a mechanic making \$10 an hour. He was paying \$3,840 a year ago, and without notice, his insurance company is raising his rates to \$6,700. All you can do is stand in your place and give glib answers.

You promised a 10% rate reduction and then you promised another 10% reduction, for a total of 20%. Insurance rates are now skyrocketing. You cancelled three regulations that would have been to the benefit of taxpayers in Ontario last fall. Would you not stand in your place, would you not admit that by taking the actions you've taken, you've made the situation even worse and you've broken another promise to the people of Ontario? Will you do that?

Hon Mr Sorbara: Let's just continue with the list. Zenith Insurance Company: rate reductions of 10%. Specialty National Insurance Company: rate reductions of 10.2%. Royal and SunAlliance Insurance Group: rate reductions of 10%.

What we said was that as soon as we were elected, we would freeze insurance rates. We would then take unprecedented steps to make sure that insurance premiums would start to go down in the province. Ninety days afterwards, a bill in this Legislature was passed. As a result of that bill, almost 55% of the industry have now filed new rates. Collectively, that represents rate reductions, from when we took office, of some 10.15%. We're very proud of that.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. As you and your Minister of Finance keep talking about an insurance rate freeze and keep saying that somewhere in the future there'll be a reduction, angry drivers phone our offices, inundate our offices, because they're getting double-digit insurance rate increases. They haven't seen a freeze; they haven't seen a 10% reduction; what they see are 20%, 25% increases. They're angry because big insurance corporations are picking their pockets, and you and your Minister of Finance say, "Oh, it's all OK."

Premier, you didn't promise that you were going to moderate insurance rates. You said you were going to cut them, and it hasn't happened. Admit now that your insurance rates scheme was always a con game; it was

always a sham. There never were and never will be real reductions of 10% and 20%.

1530

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): On this particular issue, like so many others, members of the opposition aren't prepared to take yes for an answer. There is good news here. There is wonderful news for drivers in the province of Ontario. For the first time in eight years rates have actually come down.

I'll just read some more of these figures and perhaps the member opposite might want to get hold of a copy of this so that he has it when his constituents contact him. Allstate insurance company rates have dropped by 10.09%; Accentus insurance, 10%; Aviva insurance company, a 10.15% reduction; AXA insurance, 10.0%; Belair insurance, 10.11%; Chubb Insurance Co down by 10.5%; Citadel General Assurance Co, 10.5%; Co-operators General Insurance Co, 10%, Continental Casualty Co, 10%; Dominion of Canada, 10.01%; Economical—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Mr McGuinty: Speaker, I could go on and on. There's lots more to go and I look forward to a supplementary.

Mr Hampton: You see, Premier, your friends at the auto insurance corporations send you that stuff, you read it, but then the real people in Ontario get the notice in the mail.

Here is, for example, Mr Zygi Fila from Garson, near Sudbury. Mr Fila is a 62-year-old pensioner with a six-star rating—no accidents, no tickets in the last 10 years. He just got his auto insurance bill: a whopping 17.5% increase.

Premier, you stand up and tell this pensioner with a six-star rating that a 17.5% increase in his insurance rate is really a good deal. You stand up and tell him that.

Hon Mr McGuinty: I cannot speak to that particular case, but I can return to the list provided by the superintendent of financial services of Ontario. It doesn't come from the insurance industry; it comes from a government agency: Federation Insurance Co of Canada down by 10.4%; Guarantee Co of North America down by 11.2%; Hartford Fire Insurance—there's a well-known one—down by 10%; ING Insurance Co down by 12.4%; ING Novex down by 12.6%; Langdon Insurance down by 11.8%; Lombard Insurance Co down by 10%; Motors Insurance Corp down by 10%; Nordic Insurance Co down by 10%; Pilot Insurance Co down by 10.2%; Royal and SunAlliance Insurance Co down by 10%. I look forward to providing more information.

Mr Hampton: To the Premier: Send that list to Mr Fila and see the reaction you get.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Premier, you and your good friend, your soulmate, John Manley continue to tell people that nuclear power plants

are going to be good for Ontario. Yet now we find out that Pickering B, out of service for 50 days—additional costs to the hydro bills of people, \$30 million. You and John Manley seem to be saying, “Oh, but don’t worry. This time we’re going to get it right. This time nuclear is going to work.”

Premier, what will it take you to admit that nuclear power plants are expensive, unreliable and don’t offer Ontario a very good electricity future?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): Mr Speaker, I know the Minister of Energy would like to speak to this.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): With Pickering B, unit 6, there has been the problem that was identified today in the Toronto Star. It has in fact cost OPG, I believe, \$30 million in lost revenue since that point in time.

The broader question the member asked is about the future of our supply in the province of Ontario. That member’s government failed to bring on new supply, failed to bring on demand management. The question of nuclear in Ontario’s future is an extremely important one—

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): And you’re giving them more.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. Could I ask the member from Nepean-Carleton to just come to order?

The Minister of Energy.

Hon Mr Duncan: The question of the future of nuclear in Ontario is an extremely important one that the people of Ontario are actively participating in. There have been recommendations from a variety of sources, and active debate is going on. What is paramount is that we find a way to undo 10 years of mismanagement in the hydroelectric system.

The member opposite refused to cancel the Darlington plant, for instance, when they were in office, just by way of example. I would suggest to the member that the question of the composition of our supply going forward is one of the most important ones, and we look forward to him taking a consistent and straightforward position on those important issues.

Mr Hampton: The question was the fascination of the Premier and his good friend and soulmate John Manley with more nuclear plants. Once again, I didn’t get an answer. But even the announcement that was spun here yesterday that suddenly the Premier now believes in conservation and energy efficiency won’t do it either, because there was no incentive for people to go out and purchase new energy-efficient appliances. There were no financial incentives to help people re-insulate their homes. Insulation keeps the cold out in the winter and the heat out in the summer. There was no strategy there either.

The Pembina Institute says that a serious conservation program would cost \$18 billion, but Mr Manley’s nuclear program will cost \$32 billion. Minister, when will you face the facts: Nuclear is going to cost us more money,

energy efficiency is the way to go, but what you announced yesterday doesn’t do the job either?

Hon Mr Duncan: That member and his government cancelled all conservation programs in Ontario when they were in government. Had they proceeded with those conservation programs, maybe we wouldn’t be so dependent on Pickering today. Had you done your job when you were in office, had you done the right thing on conservation, had you done the right thing on green power, we wouldn’t be relying on Pickering today and we wouldn’t find the mess we’re in today.

That government cancelled Conawapa. That would have brought 1,250 megawatts of clean power to Ontario from Manitoba. They cancelled it. Why?

Interjection: Rain forest.

Hon Mr Duncan: And they bought a rain forest in Costa Rica.

We are attempting to deal with a very difficult issue. I had some very good advice, and I’d like to share this advice because we’re quoting those who give us advice. Here’s the advice I had: “Hydro is still too big and bureaucratic, and I’m sure could be made more efficient by injecting market principles deeper into the bowels of its organization. How to do that without imperilling quality, reliability, and public accountability is a great challenge. Simplistic, ideological solutions are to be avoided at all costs.” Bob Rae, *Protest to Power*, pages 273-4.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): To the Minister of the Environment—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): There’s a voice from the extreme end that is interrupting the proceeding. May I ask her to come to order?

Mr Barrett: To the Minister of the Environment: In shutting down Adams mine, you have closed the door on 15 years of debate and environmental assessment processes. That took 15 years. How many years will it take to find another site with the same capacity to handle landfill as the Adams mine proposal? How many years, Minister?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): This government is absolutely committed to ensuring that our environment is protected, particularly our water sources. That is a commitment we take very seriously and one that the previous government turned its back on. So I’m very proud of the initiative that we will be debating later on today in the Legislative Assembly.

With respect to the siting of landfills and other initiatives in this province that are regulated by the environmental assessments and approvals process, this government has established a panel of experts who will provide this minister with advice on how to improve the process so that it doesn’t take 15 years for such projects to be approved.

1540

Mr Barrett: Minister, on the day you were sworn in, you ended your ministry’s appeal of a court decision

ordering broader terms of reference in the environmental assessment of the Richmond landfill expansion. As environment minister, you had the clout to do that for your constituents in Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

More recently, the Minister of Natural Resources successfully used his clout to stop the Adams mine landfill. Again, he used his political clout as a cabinet minister for the benefit of his constituents in Timiskaming-Cochrane.

Minister, in my view, this is environmental political pork-barrelling at its worst. It leads me to ask: Is the NIMBY principle—not in my backyard—now an official policy of your government?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: The initiatives of this government, and more particularly this ministry, which I'm very prepared to speak to as minister, are about moving this province forward with a sound environmental plan.

I would just like to remind the members of this Legislature of some of the initiatives that we have taken so far, as a government, to protect the environment. We have initiated a source water protection initiative. We have been very consultative with this process, and we are very proud of it. I have to say that it's one for which we have received, as well, very positive comment from the people of Ontario.

We have introduced the Adams mine legislation. We are not convinced that this proposal was safe and sound for the environment and for the people in that community, and I'm very proud of that initiative by this government. Yesterday, I was in Sarnia announcing an initiative whereby we are going to protect the community in that area against industrial pollution. These are some of the initiatives that this government is moving forward on because we take protecting the environment seriously.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr David Zimmer (Willowdale): My question is for the Minister of Energy. The government has a plan to reduce energy and electricity consumption in Ontario by about 5% by the year 2007. How do you see this initiative as contributing to our new culture of conservation in Ontario? How will it meet our reduction targets?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): The member is right, this is a challenging target that we've set: 5% by 2007, 10% by 2010.

Yesterday's announcement by the Premier empowers Ontario electricity consumers by providing them with the knowledge, the tools, the opportunities and the incentives that will allow them to achieve very significant energy savings. We're launching a public education and outreach campaign to help them make smart choices that will save them both energy and money.

As a demonstration of how strong our belief in conservation is, we are moving quickly to reduce the government's own electricity consumption by twice as much; that is, 10% by 2007. My colleague the Chair of

Management Board has laid out a very ambitious program.

We're putting forward the necessary infrastructure to make sure that conservation becomes part of our culture. We are creating the conservation secretariat within the Ontario power authority and a conservation program that will be the envy of the world. Our sector reform, supported by work we do with the LDCs, will make Ontario a world leader in conservation.

Mr Zimmer: The government has aggressive plans for smart meters. Yesterday, the Premier announced that we're setting aggressive targets to put these smart meters in every home so that, together with more flexible pricing, Ontarians can save money if they run their appliances in off-peak hours. Minister, why are these smart meters important? How do they contribute to our overall change of energy saving?

Hon Mr Duncan: We have set an ambitious target of having a smart meter in every home and small business by 2010. Yesterday, Premier McGuinty announced our interim target of having 800,000 meters in place in Ontario by 2007. Smart meters are a key conservation tool. With this technology, consumers will be able to see, understand and learn when it's appropriate to adjust their electricity use. Smart meters will also allow consumers to benefit from time-of-use rates. These rates will benefit consumers who use electricity when demand is lower. Many consumers who currently use electricity during these times will now be able to benefit from these rates. Not only do smart meters help consumers use electricity during peak demand periods, but they also benefit their local system and grid by keeping costs and prices down even more.

I've asked the OEB to devise an implementation plan for smart meters. The OEB will be working with local distribution companies to achieve that. These bold new initiatives will make Ontario the world leader in energy conservation, something this government is very, very proud of.

WATER QUALITY

Mr John Yakubuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question today is for the Minister of the Environment. I've got countless constituents sending me countless letters and countless phone calls with regard to the hardship they're going to face with the implementation of regulation 170/03. What they've told me is that they simply cannot handle the financial burden of implementing this regulation. We have churches that are going to close; some churches have closed already. We have campgrounds that are threatening to close within the month; they're not going to open for this season. What are you going to do to mitigate this effect and to help these people with this financial burden under the implementation of this regulation?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): First of all, I want to share with the members of this House that, for this government, ensuring that

wherever we are in the province of Ontario—in rural Ontario, in an urban centre—when we turn on the tap, the water is safe.

During the Rural Ontario Municipal Association conference here in Toronto in February, I met with over 40 municipal representatives. I have to say that issues around regulation 170 was a common theme. I will say to the member opposite that, like this government, municipal representatives share our desire to ensure that when a tap is turned on in the province of Ontario, the water is safe.

We recognize that the regulation that was introduced, which was crafted by the previous government, is terribly flawed. I don't know where your rural members were at the time of the writing of regulation 170. They were missing in action, very obviously. This minister has committed and asked my ministry to look at regulation 170 to make it more workable for municipalities in rural Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. The member for Bruce-Grey will come to order.

Supplementary?

Mr Yakabuski: Minister, I would think that all municipalities and all citizens of the province of Ontario want to ensure that we have safe, clean drinking water. You are well aware of recommendation 84 in the O'Connor report, that in these circumstances it is imperative that where the subject people cannot afford to proceed with these implementation on their own, the government must be there to assist them. That's recommendation 84 of the O'Connor report. Will you follow that recommendation and assist these rural people in the implementation of this regulation?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: Unlike the previous government, this government is committed to implementing all of the O'Connor recommendations. That is without question. With respect to recommendation 84 and regulation 170, we believe that regulation 170 needs to be looked at again to look for ways to assist municipalities so that they can in fact meet the requirement to ensure that there is safe water within the community facilities across rural Ontario. That is what this government has committed to. We will review regulation 170. We want to work with municipalities, so that when a tap is turned on in a community hall, a church hall or any other municipal facility, the people of this province can be certain the water is safe to drink.

1550

SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Attorney General. During the past decade in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, there have been numerous cries for an independent public inquiry into childhood sexual abuse allegations and cover-ups in Cornwall. As a candidate in the last election, I wholeheartedly supported a public

inquiry. The lives of many people have been touched by the issues surrounding these allegations. The citizens, police forces, public organizations and those who work in the judiciary system are in need of a sense of worth and community. A thorough investigation will have positive consequences for those who work to uphold pride, sensibility and the spirit of community in my riding.

I stand today on behalf of the people of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, especially those victims of abuse in Cornwall. I, alongside these victims, believe that an inquiry into these events is necessary to bring closure to this issue so that we can move on. Will you call a public inquiry into this matter?

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I understand that this is an issue of great importance to the member and of great importance to the people of his community. There is right now a criminal proceeding that is underway. Leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada was refused, and the Court of Appeal decision required that the last remaining trial involved in this matter be expedited. It is set to begin in the fall. I don't want to do anything to delay or in any way interfere with this criminal proceeding. A public inquiry cannot be held at this time, while this criminal proceeding is underway.

Mr Brownell: Minister, your consideration of the request is appreciated. I know the people of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh respect your discretion and judgment. However, when the Liberals were in opposition, they called upon the government of the day to launch a public inquiry into the sexual abuses in Cornwall. My community still feels a public inquiry is necessary to get to the bottom of the abuses in Cornwall. I will continue to be a strong advocate here at Queen's Park for an inquiry into these abuses. Will you work with me and the community to ensure there is a resolution to this matter?

Hon Mr Bryant: Yes, I will. The member has been absolutely relentless in fulfilling his duty on behalf of his community and his riding, through this Legislature, to hold the government to account. The member has stood shoulder to shoulder with his community, and we have spoken at length on the subject numerous times.

When the criminal proceeding is complete, at that point, we will be relying upon that member to continue to be an advocate on behalf of his community. We will obviously consult with his community, consult with his riding, and consult in particular with him as to what next steps will be taken. So, yes, we will be continuing to work with the member in his hard work on behalf of the people of his community.

BAUER NIKE HOCKEY

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, tonight's hockey game doesn't end the battle of Ontario. You see, the real battle of Ontario is the battle to keep good, well-paying

jobs in this province; in this case, jobs manufacturing hockey equipment. Less than a decade ago, sports multinational Nike bought Canada's Bauer Corp, the world's largest maker of hockey skates and protective gear, most of which was manufactured right here in Ontario. Since then, Nike has slashed operations, sending good jobs to plants in China and contracting them out to sweatshop workers here in Ontario. A few days ago, the 25 long-time skilled workers at the Bauer Nike Mississauga custom pro shop learned that the work they do for all of the top NHL goalies is being contracted out to the lowest bidder.

Minister, it's sudden-death overtime for these workers and for this industry here in the province. What are you going to do to protect their jobs?

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I'm not familiar with the specifics of what the member is talking about, but I do know that as much as there are jobs going offshore—and it happens in North America with other industries; there have been losses in the United States to offshore companies—there is a phenomenon that's taking place right here in Canada called near-shoring. There are companies that are actually locating here in Ontario because we provide tremendous competitive advantages.

This is obviously a case of jobs, on the one hand, going to India and going to China because there is a competitive factor involved, but we also have jobs that are locating here. In fact, there are companies locating here that are from India and from parts of the world that you wouldn't think would locate here, and they're doing so because we have a competitive environment right here in Ontario.

Mr Kormos: Minister, your job is to protect Ontario's jobs. Nike is a big multinational company that only cares about the bottom line and, in response, you skate in circles. In Cambridge, Nike shut down Ontario's last hockey stick factory—300 people out of work. They refused to put that factory on the market to Canadian investors who want to use that factory and those workers to make Canadian hockey sticks, because they don't want the competition.

So you've got a unique Canadian industry, unique to Ontario, and you're going to put our NHL players in made-in-China hockey equipment. You've got a chance, right now, with your Premier, to get on the phone, call Nike to come sit with you at the table and talk about ways to keep those Canadian jobs, that Canadian manufacturing, here in Ontario. It's your job to protect those jobs. When are you going to start doing your job?

Hon Mr Cordiano: I'll just cite the competitive factors that we have going for us in Ontario. In fact, there was a KPMG study that says it's 25% cheaper to operate a business in places like Ottawa for telecommunications. There's also a PWC study that was released, I believe, last week, that shows that we clearly retain a competitive advantage as a near-shore location because of our lower labour costs, and that's in the ICT sector, one of the most innovative sectors of the economy which is seeing job growth.

We may lose some jobs as a result of international competitive forces—and this is happening in the industrial world—but we remain highly attractive as a place to do business. We are seeing, as I say, the near-shore phenomenon take place. We are attracting investment to this province which will see job growth in the ICT sector, which is very important for the innovative economy that we're promoting. We're going to see that increase in the near future.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. As you are aware, this is National Volunteer Week. Volunteers across our province are contributing hundreds of thousands of hours to make Ontario a cleaner, healthier and safer place to live.

Volunteers, of course, include our valuable volunteer fire departments, and primarily those fire departments in rural Ontario. Recently you indicated that the mediation report by the highly regarded mediation expert, Justice George Adams, was unacceptable, and you would have to seek further mediation on this. Minister, when will you announce your new mediation proposal, and could you explain, what exactly was wrong with the Adams report?

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): The problem with the Adams report is that nobody would agree to it. You were the ones who commissioned it. If it had come up with a solution that was acceptable to the parties, that would have been the end of it. The problem we have is that there is no unanimity on the recommendations that were made in that report.

I have met with all of the stakeholders. I have told them quite clearly that my preference would be to have a mediated solution. If I can't get that, then I will have to bring in legislation. Everybody understands that. The problem I've got is that in order to get those people back to the table, I've got to come up with a structured mediation, because they have said, "We've already gone through that under the previous government, and we're not prepared to do it again." That is where we are.

It's an issue that is very difficult but one that I am committed to solving.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): It being 4 o'clock, pursuant to standing order 30(b) I am now required to call orders of the day.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Speaker: In the spirit of co-operation in this Legislature, I would ask that we extend the time in order to finish question period this afternoon.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? I think I heard a no.

Minister?

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Yes, Speaker. Government order—

The Speaker: One thing at a time. Order. Could I have the House just settle down a bit so we can proceed?

The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): On a point of order, Speaker: I would like unanimous consent that we have petitions today, because we've run out of time—

The Speaker: I heard a no.

1600

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ADAMS MINE LAKE ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004

SUR LE LAC DE LA MINE ADAMS

Ms Dombrowsky moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 49, An Act to prevent the disposal of waste at the Adams Mine site and to amend the Environmental Protection Act in respect of the disposal of waste in lakes / *Projet de loi 49, Loi visant à empêcher l'élimination de déchets à la mine Adams et à modifier la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement en ce qui concerne l'élimination de déchets dans des lacs.*

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I am pleased to have this opportunity to address members of this Legislature on the second reading of the Adams Mine Lake Act. The act shows that the McGuinty government is making good on its promise to deliver real, positive change to ensure that communities across Ontario are clean, safe and livable. This is a promise that we take very seriously, and one that is the cornerstone of the all our efforts to protect precious air, water and land. Surely all of the members of this House would agree that Ontarians deserve a cleaner environment and cleaner communities that benefit the people who live in them, the people that we represent.

Just over two weeks ago, our government announced a new strategy to manage Ontario's waste and reduce the burden on landfills in the province. It is a far-reaching strategy that will help us by setting targets for waste diversion over the next four years. It also addresses root issues with the environmental assessment process that have led to so much uncertainty for so long. Ontario has set an ambitious new provincial target to divert 60% of waste from landfill by the year 2008. In early May, we will release a discussion paper exploring options to ensure that 60% of waste from the municipal, industrial, commercial, institutional, construction and demolition sectors is diverted from landfill. Other issues to be considered through the discussion paper include a plan to direct organics and recyclables from landfill, the expansion of central composting facilities, and the role of new technologies to help Ontario divert more waste.

This government is also taking action to improve the environmental assessment and approvals process. This is of particular importance for waste management facilities, provincial highways, transit and clean energy projects.

We will establish an expert advisory panel to identify ways to improve the environmental assessment process and to provide greater certainty and timelines while maintaining or enhancing environmental protection. Our goal is to increase waste diversion, help address the issues with landfill siting and give the public more confidence in the process.

As well, we have entered into a draft framework agreement with the federal government to coordinate the environmental assessment of projects that are subject to both the provincial and federal processes. Environmental assessments should be about clarity, not about pointless repetition. This is an issue that has come to us very regularly, and I am very pleased to be part of a government that has finally taken an initiative to address it.

The agreement that has been posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry is what I'm speaking of today. The 30-day comment period ends on May 14.

It is important that the members of this Legislature understand the fullness and comprehensiveness of our vision for managing waste in Ontario. We are here today to debate a critically important piece of legislation, and it needs to be understood in that context.

I think it's very important to stress as well, as I've stated a number of times in this Legislature, that the management of municipal solid waste is a municipal responsibility. But what we have heard from municipal representatives across Ontario time and time again is that the process that is in place at the present time has not been working well for a number of years. Consequently, it can be a very time-consuming, onerous and expensive proposal for municipalities. This government wants to provide municipalities with the tools that will enable them to meet this very important need within their communities in a very timely way.

The Adams Mine Lake Act will close the book on an issue that has come to symbolize everything that was wrong with waste management in Ontario. The Adams mine site is not the whole problem; it is evidence of a larger problem. Our government's comprehensive waste strategy takes a lesson from our health care strategy. We are not merely treating the symptom; we are finding a cure.

This is great news for local communities. It is great news for Ontario's environment. If passed, the Adams Mine Lake Act would achieve the following: prohibit the disposal of waste at the Adams mine site; revoke all existing approvals dealing with the Adams mine site and will avoid any decision on the permit to take water that is pending; remove the ability for any party to take legal action against the government on these decisions; outline a plan to provide reasonable compensation for the owner of the Adams mine proposal; and amend the Environmental Protection Act to disallow the use of any lake over one hectare in size as a landfill site.

Adams mine has been subjected to endless rounds of proposals, challenges and great controversy within the community. At this point in time, I think it's appropriate that I recognize our colleague from Timiskaming, who

has been relentless in advocating on behalf of his constituents on this very important issue.

All of this debate has been a source of great uncertainty within the community and within the province. It has drained the energy and resources of local communities, and for far too long, it has created divisiveness in communities near the Adams mine lake site and other communities in the province of Ontario. The local community has repeatedly voiced concerns about the Adams mine landfill. For this government, the protection of our communities is of paramount concern.

We learn our lessons well in this government, and we believe that there have been examples in recent history that we cannot afford to ignore.

The language of this act is clear and straightforward. We want there to be no misunderstanding of our directions and the need for local certainty. The proponents have been seeking approvals for a landfill to be operational in the year 2005, with a capacity of one million tonnes of garbage per year. Yet the scoping provisions of the Environmental Assessment Act were used for the hearing of the proposal, where the only consideration was the hydraulic containment concept being proposed for the site. Others may have been prepared to cut corners and jeopardize local communities, but this government is not. The fact that the review at the tribunal was scoped was the great concern voiced by many people in that community. We are not convinced that the Adams mine proposal could operate safely and protect the environment.

1610

This government is acting responsibly to address the community's concern. The risks are far too great. The health and well-being of the people in the community are worth this consideration. We are not prepared to gamble with their health or their future or the health and future of their descendants.

I would now like to take a closer look at some of the contents of the act that we are discussing today. Bill 49 is intended to: prohibit the use of lakes as landfill sites; prevent the use of the Adams mine site as a landfill; and deal with matters related to the government's taking this action.

The proposed legislation amends the Environmental Protection Act to prevent the use of lakes as landfill sites. For the purposes of the bill, the definition of "lake" includes:

- "(a) a body of surface water that,
- "(i) results from human activities, and
- "(ii) directly influences or is directly influenced by groundwater."

This includes land that is covered by water on the date the proposed legislation comes into force.

I would just like to reference here that there has been some other observation around what is a lake and what is not a lake: Is it a mine? Is it a flooded mine? I think that debate could be extended and applied to many lakes we have in Ontario today. It could be argued that if we hadn't built a dam, we wouldn't have a lake.

The fact remains that we have a body of water that is fed by surface water and groundwater, so communities

tend to call those bodies of water lakes. That is why we have decided to call the Adams mine lake a lake. It is fed by both surface water and groundwater. I do know of another open pit in my own riding, the Marmoraton mine, that is filling as a lake. The people in that community consider it a body of water like a lake.

The proposed amendment does not apply to a body of water that is less than one hectare in area. The proposed legislation would revoke any proposals and permits related to the Adams mine project issued by the Ministry of the Environment before the date the legislation comes into force. The Adams Mine Lake Act would also nullify any applications for permits under consideration by the Ministry of the Environment as of the date the proposed legislation comes into force. In addition, the proposed legislation would extinguish any agreements of purchase and sale of the adjacent crown land that may have been entered into between the Ministry of Natural Resources and the owner of the Adams mine.

Any related legal action against the crown that may exist on the date that the proposed legislation comes into force is extinguished by the proposed legislation. The Adams Mine Lake Act would also prevent any further legal action being taken against the crown as a result of the legislation.

Let me be very clear: Bill 49 is not an expropriation of the Adams mine property. The Adams Mine Lake Act would require the province to pay the owner of the Adams mine compensation for reasonable expenses incurred prior to the date the legislation comes into force.

Under Bill 49, expenses would be defined as costs incurred for the purpose of developing Adams mine landfill. These expenses would include the acquisition of the Adams mine site, surveys, studies and testing, engineering and design services, legal services, marketing and promotion, property taxes, seeking government approvals and seeking acquisition of crown land.

Compensation would not be paid for any future profits the owner may or may not have received as a result of operating a landfill at the Adams mine site. The amount of compensation would be determined based on the expenses minus the fair market value of the site on the date the legislation comes into force. Bill 49 provides for a mechanism for the owner to obtain compensation. Within 120 days of the date the proposed legislation comes into force, the owner would need to provide the crown with the necessary records to support the claims for compensation. Where there is agreement between the owner and the crown on expenses for which compensation is being sought, compensation would be paid. For any claims that are in dispute, the owner or the crown can apply to the courts for a determination of the amount of compensation.

What this means is that our government is being fair and is dealing openly with everyone, including the owner of the land. This is an open and transparent process. We are doing the right thing and taking the action desired by the majority, but we are also being fair to all parties and clear from the outset on how to conclude this issue.

I've just outlined some of the specifics of Bill 49. They add up to an excellent piece of legislation that protects the environment and the people of Ontario and that is fair to the owner of the Adams mine. We want to ensure that the owner receives reasonable reimbursement for the costs that have been incurred in the proposal to use the Adams mine as a landfill, but our foremost concern is the health and well-being of the people of Ontario, and particularly the people of the community. We deserve the peace of mind that comes with knowing that their environment is being protected and that their interests are being addressed by the government. After all, this second reading debate is not just about a piece of paper; it is about people and their ability to enjoy and derive benefit from the communities in which they live.

I am proud to stand before my colleagues to represent a government that remains focused on the real task at hand: maintaining and improving upon the quality of life that Ontarians have earned and have come to enjoy. I believe that the Adams Mine Lake Act has the support of the people of northern Ontario and it deserves the support of all the members of this House.

Before I conclude my remarks, I would like to say that at this time I am happy to share my time with the Minister of Natural Resources, as well as the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot and the member for Northumberland. I call on my fellow members to help make the Adams Mine Lake Act a law.

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): It is indeed an honour to be able to stand in my place after all these years to support this act. I'd like to thank my colleague the Minister of the Environment for all her tireless work and the work of her staff, both her political staff and the civil servants in the Ministry of the Environment, especially their legal staff. Also, I'd like to thank the same people in my office, in the Ministry of Natural Resources, for the work they did.

In fact, I have to say that if it weren't for the bureaucrats in the Ministry of Natural Resources and their decision early last year not to proceed with the disposition of the crown land that is adjacent to the Adams mine site, this project might have gone ahead. When we brought up in this House that it was the intent, as had been a condition of the environmental assessment, that the adjoining crown land be acquired by the proponent, we brought up the fact that we felt that was inappropriate without consultation with First Nations. After some deliberation the ministry had agreed, even under the previous government, and those deliberations had proceeded, and we're still going ahead.

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I'd also like to thank Premier Dalton McGuinty, who has put, as he always does, the environment ahead of, in this case, money, because there's a lot of money involved with this particular project. I think that's what kept it alive, basically. Over the dumping lifespan of this project, there would have been tipping fees in the millions and millions—in fact, billions—of dollars. This would have been a very lucrative project, which was very tough

for me as the member up there. This project would have brought some jobs to the area, there's no doubt about it.

In the end, you have to make a decision as to what sort of jobs you work for. Do you work for jobs that are environmentally sustainable? In my case, I've always said that that is the side you have to come down on, because in the end, we have nothing if we don't have a sound environment. We need to not only protect the environment around us but, by doing that, protect the health of human beings also. It's not an issue of protecting the environment or not; it's protecting all of us because we all live in the same environment.

This obviously was a very tough decision for this government to make. It is a very strong piece of legislation, there's no doubt about it. It certainly has its critics and I'm sure will continue to do so, as we will probably hear today.

I have to thank the people of Timiskaming, who have waged an heroic battle against this project over the last 10 years especially, and, for some, over the last 15 years. This has weighed very heavily on people who live downstream from this project, especially in the farming belt, the little clay belt part of Timiskaming that is a very rich agricultural area in northern Ontario in the Timiskaming district. There are 600 farms there. Primarily they are beef and dairy farms with some cereal grain and cash crops developing there now. Of course, to be able to obtain and to utilize pristine water is the basis of any farm operation, especially dealing with livestock. Not only the farm operation, but basically most of us who live in that area derive our water source from groundwater and not from surface water, so groundwater is of the utmost importance. Those of us who have wells and need our wells to survive in that area have always understood that, but it was a real eye-opener for all of us in Ontario, after the tragedy of Walkerton, how important that groundwater resource is and also, probably more importantly, how vulnerable our groundwater resources are. That some heavy rains and some washing of a farmer's field can contribute to the death of people, I think, was absolutely a stunning development, a tragic development. We have learned so much from that tragedy.

I think it's fair to say that this legislation that the Ministry of the Environment has proposed today is a result of what we've learned from the Walkerton tragedy: that never again will we take for granted the wealth that we have beneath our feet in the groundwater resources that we have in this province. They are very precious. They are life itself. They are life-sustaining, and we must protect them at all costs. This legislation, with the other initiatives the Minister of the Environment has brought forward, is working toward that goal: to make sure that never again do we ever take those groundwater resources for granted.

Just very quickly, and before I give up my time to other members of the House who I know are very anxious to speak to this bill, I would like to review exactly what the idea of this project was, because, unlike a regular landfill, where it is of the utmost importance

that you keep the water separate from the waste so you don't get leaching into the groundwater, this particular project was exactly the reverse. The idea was to allow, if you will, to encourage, the groundwater to come through, to leach out the toxins from the garbage, pick up that leachate—the toxic soup, if you will, that's a result of that leaching—through a pumping system that has to be actively pumped for 75 to 80 years as that leachate is pumped up through a water filtration plant and treatment plant before that water is discharged for the environment.

The best estimate was in this project that it would take 75 to 80 years or so of active pumping in order to clean out the toxins from the 100 million tonnes of garbage that was to go into that pit. The contingency was, though, that if that didn't work, the project could be actively pumped for 800 to 1,000 years, and that was given approval in the project.

I cannot imagine standing in this place today and saying, "You know what? I've got a terrific idea for our garbage. We'll find this big hole, and we can use our groundwater—we've got lots of it up there, because it's right at the headwaters between the Arctic and the Atlantic watershed, so it's the cleanest water, as we're right at the height of land there—to clean out the toxins from this waste."

If I was to say that, and say, "By the way, of course, it's totally reliant upon a mechanical system that cannot foul up or fail in any way, or we would have contamination of the aquifer. And by the way, our best guess is that it might be 75 to 80 years, but just in case we're wrong on that, we actively pump it almost in perpetuity," I can just imagine a Kirkland Lake or other town council, 200 or 300 years down the road, around that table, scratching their head and wondering, "What did we do back in beginning of the 21st century, at the dawn of a new technical age? Did we find this big hole and just fill it up with garbage in the hope that a mechanical system would protect the aquifer and the groundwater?"

That was the plan. Again, I congratulate the minister and the Premier for stopping this project before the environment was destroyed.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): From an early age, every responsible parent endeavours to communicate to their children life's important lessons. One of those lessons is that, surely, you need to clean up your own mess. In the aftermath of Walkerton, one of the most important issues facing us in Ontario today is what we do with our garbage. Today, we have both the technology and the ability to make new choices, choices which would allow us to simply refuse turning any freshwater lake anywhere in Ontario into a garbage soup with 65,000 different pollutants poised to poison our major lakes and water supply.

It has been an age-old notion that you don't poison your neighbour's well, and I'm pleased to see this expression here in the Legislature that we in Ontario want to quit doing that, just as we want to quit poisoning the air, which is why we've moved on second-hand smoke so aggressively.

Noted environmentalist Bobby Kennedy Jr, recently in Ontario as part of an education tour, suggested that putting garbage into the Adams mine was "a slow way of throwing it directly into Lake Ontario." David Suzuki was even more blunt, suggesting that any decision to place garbage in the Adams mine would be "an act of political terrorism." Both were emphasizing the need for us to make new choices.

I just want to point out that I think there are two essential elements to making new choices: strong and enlightened leadership—and we've seen some of that from the good Minister of the Environment today; and an active and educated citizenry—and the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane made reference to his good citizens who have been fighting this fight for many years. Sometimes I think, at least until recently, that in Toronto, a city of fibreglass booths and Olympic hot air, they failed on both counts. But I need to say, I'm optimistic on that count. I think, with the new mayor and the new council, that some things are about to be turned around.

When I was first elected here, I think the second day I was in the House, we were debating this thing called the Adams mine. I had read the news reports, so I knew a little bit about it, but as I listened to the debate and I heard the various parties scoring their obligatory political points, it occurred to me that everybody was right: "You didn't do this. You didn't do that. You should have done this."

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I guess I committed an error. I scribbled a note off to the then Minister of the Environment, Dan Newman, and said, "You know, Dan, it occurs to me that everybody's right, but nobody's taking responsibility." None of us are guilty, but we're all responsible.

"I used to work here 25 years ago," I said in my note to Dan, "when Bill Davis was Premier and he had a unique way of dealing with problem situations." He'd create a select committee of the Ontario Legislature. He'd bring together the best minds on issues and try to come up with some non-partisan answers that would, in fact, not only make common sense, but would be in the common good. Maybe that's why they were in power for 44 consecutive years, because they did that sort of thing.

I said, "Why don't you challenge the other two leaders to do that right now and see what the response is?" He gave me the thumbs up and shared the note with John Snobelen. Snobelen chuckled and gave me the thumbs up. I remember Dan saying, "You, me, five minutes, outside." So I waited and I waited. Needless to say, we never connected. I said to Minister Newman the next day, "What happened?" He said to me, without a word of exaggeration, "I thought it was a great idea. Snobelen thought it was a great idea, but I shared it with the Premier. He's still mad about something you guys did two weeks ago, so we're not going to do it." That's how we work around here.

Anyhow, it was an important first experience. Alas, I felt a bit like Eleanor Rigby writing the words of a sermon that no one would hear.

It's about choices, and I need to confess that I'm an interventionist. I don't think there's any sense being in government unless you're prepared to intervene for the common good. I want to compliment the minister and the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane in this regard. This minister gets it. She understands that sometimes you've got to make difficult choices, sometimes you have to exercise real leadership and sometimes you have to do things that are going to tick some people off, but it's the right thing to do. Some governments have a reputation for trying to be lean and mean. This minister wants to be keen and green, to her everlasting credit.

By the way, the Canadian Oxford Dictionary, lest anybody be confused, defines a lake as "a large body of water surrounded by land," Madam Minister, or an expanse of excess liquid. This qualifies on both counts, if anybody wants to make that picayune—

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): Distinction.

Mr McMeekin:—distinction. Thank you, member for Hamilton West.

The minister also knows that any journey requires fewer steps when you've got some idea where it is you're going. She's prepared, as is this government, to travel over some new ground, to move from tinkering to transformation. To do that, she understands—and the bill articulates this, and we members in the House understand, and hopefully by the time this debate is over, every member will understand—that we need to be exploring and embracing new and better waste disposal technologies. We need to be acknowledging that garbage is a major provincial issue, not just a Toronto issue. We need to identify and advocate a series of non-partisan and responsible management alternatives. We need to do all of that proactively, "thinking globally and acting locally," as the social justice phrase would suggest. We need to be collaborative about it. We need to work in partnership with our municipal friends and others who can bring to the table some of their wisdom. Our Premier is fond of saying, "None of us is as smart as all of us." He's right; it's true. When we gather good people around the table to share ideas, it works.

I know in my riding of ADFA—if you need some help, Mr Speaker, just refer to ADFA—we have a series of listening advisory groups: one on education, one on health care, a youth group, a seniors' group and, importantly, an environmental group. I meet with this group three or four times a year. We gather people who have a concern for the environment. You know what? It makes me a better MPP by listening.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Enlightened leadership.

Mr McMeekin: We've been out there. That's right, enlightened leadership—management by walking around, as one of the business gurus used to call it.

We need to look to progressive cities like Guelph, Halifax, Hamilton and Edmonton to know that good, eco-friendly garbage disposal plants are now at work all around us and in other communities.

I wanted to speak to this today for a personal reason. We went through a very similar kind of experience in our

riding of Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot with the whole issue of the Redlands-Steetley quarry there. It was, as in Timiskaming-Cochrane, a defining moment in our community history and a heroic battle. I think of citizens like Mark Osborne, Ken and Anna-Marie Goldman, Helen and Andrew Brink, and Jill and the late Bill Campure, who argued for some eight years that putting Canada's third-largest landfill site in a 200-acre fractured limestone quarry, when we had a history of leachate leaching over the escarpment in the adjacent Brow landfill site, just didn't make sense, in spite of the size of the container that they were talking about using. There were a lot of jokes that related to birth control and that sort of thing, but I'll spare the House those. In the community, they had some resonance.

There are a lot of important statistics around that, but I think what's really, really important is that that community, as in the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane's community, relied on an artesian well system, and there was a very real and legitimate worry that no matter what precautions were taken, we couldn't safely plan for it and protect the community; that the dump would be visually offensive; that the noisy machinery would be disconcerting; that the quality and quantity of groundwater would be altered; that leachate picking up contaminants, many of them potentially hazardous, had the very real potential, the experts told us, of leaching into the well system, the drinking system; that there was a fear of vegetation die-off; and that there was no discernible designation of predictable migration pathways that would have occurred. In fact, out at the Brow landfill site, we had a chemical called benzene, which I, upon doing some research, discovered was quite carcinogenic. Even the company's own consultant had said all of that.

Needless to say, the people in Greensville were absolutely horrified. The scary thing is, during their eight-year battle and all through a 19-month joint board hearing, the Ministry of the Environment refused to come to the table on one side or the other. Then when the board, to the surprise of many, made a decision to stand with the community—they in fact said, and I quote from their decision, that moving ahead would "pose an unacceptable risk to both local groundwater and surface water" and would "dramatically change the character of the area surrounding the quarry and that of the residents within the surrounding communities"—in spite of all of that, the company, through this process of political intrigue, was able to appeal it to cabinet, and the Ministry of the Environment stood with the company after just sitting right out of the whole issue for almost six years.

Mr Leal: Shocking.

Mr McMeekin: It was shocking. People couldn't believe it. No wonder people are so often cynical about government. This was an issue that literally tore families apart for six years. This little community group called GASP—Greensville Against Serious Pollution—had to raise over \$100,000 to fight that battle. They fought and eventually elected a mayor who happened to agree with their cause and was able to be an advocate at the region,

which up until that point hadn't really supported their cause. We raised some money, brought some people in and turned it around. Fortunately, that didn't proceed.

Interjection.

Mr McMeekin: He was a good mayor, that mayor.

Mr Leal: Can you tell everybody who the mayor was?
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Mr McMeekin: No, I'll spare the House that. The mayor worked hard, but more importantly, the community worked hard. There were families ripped apart through this whole process. Anyhow, it was a heroic battle. They fought for a long time and they eventually made it happen.

The point I want to make, given the retroactive look at history, is that leaving vital matters, like this matter was, to the discretion of a small group of powerful politicians, potentially in league with corporate interests, makes the rule of law little more than a joke. I think we've seen many of these particular qualities with respect to this decision.

So I'm in my place today remembering that unique piece of local history and the courageous efforts of my folk who want to stand in solidarity with the good people from Timiskaming and Cochrane and the wonderful Minister of the Environment. While I was in opposition, she called for a select committee, and since we've been elected government, she's called for the same. She has, to her everlasting credit, moved to create a body of people who will come together, stakeholders with a vested interest in doing the right thing, stakeholders who understand that to be a true environmentalist you have to plant trees the shade of which you may never sit under.

I rise in support of this legislation. It's appropriate; it's visionary; it's certainly timely. It's going to save a lot of wear and tear and grief on residents and, most important, or almost as important as the environmentally positive things that will accrue from it, it's going to go a long way to restoring the faith and confidence and hope and trust that the people of Ontario need to have in their government. Thank you, Madam Minister.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): I would remind the members that you have to indicate that you're sharing your time with another member. I ask the member to rise again and indicate who he's sharing his time with.

Mr McMeekin: The minister had mentioned it in her opening remarks. I thought she had covered that. The member from Northumberland.

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): It's a real pleasure to stand here today and support our minister introducing Bill 49. I think it's not only the right thing to do, but it's long overdue. When I stop and reflect on Bill 49 and its intent, I cannot help but reflect—even though it's way before my time—that we're suffering the consequences today on what our predecessors did some 75, 50, 100 years ago. They found it convenient to dump waste in wetlands, on water, just to reclaim it. We're suffering those consequences today. We're wondering what those people were thinking about. I'm sure it was the best thing to do at that time, but we recognize today

that we're paying for it. We're suffering those consequences today.

This is really a big initiative for this government and for the minister to take to look forward, because the intent of the Adams mine was to revert to what we were doing 50 or 75 years ago. It just doesn't make sense. To me, that's not progress.

I cannot help, as I speak today, to reflect on my riding of Northumberland and what some of our objectives were some 10, 12 years ago. We started a waste recycling facility. My predecessors, prior to me being on council in Northumberland county, had the foresight to see and understand the difficulties we had dealing with waste. In the village of Grafton, centrally located, there's a material recovery facility that employs some 50 people and handles roughly 1,200 tonnes of waste per month. This is waste that's not going to a landfill site. We need to do more and more of that.

On a global scale, when we recycle or get into the scenario of not burying the waste underground, we find better uses through emphasizing the 3Rs. On the recycling portion of it, I'd like to make this House aware of the importance, as I said before, of not burying that waste in the ground—out of sight, out of mind, and we suffer the consequences years down the road when the leachate contaminates our streams, our water and our environment.

I'd like to give you an example. Every tonne of steel cans that is recycled saves 1.36 tonnes of iron ore that we don't have to dig from the ground. Also, to produce steel from that iron ore, for that one tonne, we're saving 3.6 barrels of oil. Those are natural resources that we could use for other functions.

In the riding of Northumberland, in 2002 the waste recycling facility saved 832 tonnes of waste from going into the landfill site. Using the formula that I just indicated, we also saved on not using 2,203 barrels of crude oil. Part of the equation that we keep on saying is that every time we see a piece of paper in front of us, we're destroying some more trees, which are part of our environment. Out of that plant alone, which serves some 80,000 residents in the riding of Northumberland, in one year they saved over 50,000 trees from recycling paper.

We need to move forward. We need the bill that had second reading today. It's certainly the right direction to go, not only for the environment of those folks who are surrounded by the Adams mine, but it also sends a strong message that we're committed to what their government stands for.

I'll refer once again to the recycling facility in my riding.

"In 2002.... By selling its plastics to China,"—and this is recycled, reclaimed plastic—"aluminum to the United States and paper to Quebec plus more" of the recycling, the county of Northumberland was able to have 32,000 tonnes of this material, which brought in over \$1 million in revenue. This money would have just been buried in the ground.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of not burying the waste in the ground, not in such a way where

Adams mine—from all of the reports that were done—was totally unprotected. It's certainly an area—not visited; just reading from the reports—that collected natural water. We had a natural lake made after the excavation from the mine. That's part of the natural resource, and to just fill that and bury it—I hate to think what our children and our grandchildren will think of us today, the legacy we will leave them.

I'm proud to say that in my riding, back at its inception, once again we were the leaders in recycling. We saw that back in the mid-1980s landfill sites were starting to get scarce. In the county of Northumberland, they spent \$2 million to investigate the potential of a new landfill site to deal with our waste. After spending \$2 million, they still didn't have a result, and that's when the concept of spending those resources on recycling came to fruition.

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In my riding, even though it doesn't sound like a very long period, under the present recycling conditions we have somewhere between 15 and 20 years in the life of our landfills. Yet in the mid-1980s, prior to the recycling project taking shape, we were talking a very few single-digit years. So there are ways out there that we need to investigate. We're in the 21st century and we need to move on to that.

Back in 2000, Northumberland was the number one community, serving some 80,000 people, that recycled about 31% of their total waste generated. We were the leaders. Another community that's part of my riding, the city of Quinte West, for which I share responsibility with the member for Prince Edward-Hastings, was third in Ontario recycling, with 26%. I'm also proud to say—and I guess it's a little bit of bragging—that I was part of that process. I'm really proud to say that in the riding of Northumberland, in Northumberland county, we produce the lowest amount of waste per household. I believe the education portion that we instilled in our residents is coming to fruition. So we need to educate about the importance of not burying waste in the ground. As I said before, once we bury waste, we really don't know what happens. Now we have the opportunity to do something about it.

Bill 49, I believe, as I said before, is definitely the right direction to go. It certainly wasn't the direction of some of the past governments that seemed to play political football with waste. One of the fears that we have is that we're going to be inheriting some of the waste from some other municipalities within the province of Ontario in the smaller rural areas where they still have some capacity for their own use. We need to come to a solution. Obviously, now that we know the Adams mine is not going to be an option, hopefully when this bill is passed, we need to move on and help our neighbours in the city of Toronto come up with a solution.

Just some of the history about waste and why the mine seems to be an easy solution: "Truck it up north. Put it in the ground. There's not a lot of population. Nobody will see it and we solve the problems." That was the previous government's way of dealing with waste. I'm just so

delighted that our minister has taken this bold step. It's very decisive and it moves forward by having some consultation on how we deal with waste in the future. I know at the end of the day—we have so many experts who are in the field and we have so many dedicated Ontarians who are prepared to help achieve our cause—we'll have absolutely no problem achieving this government's goal, the 60% reduction in landfill, and to recycle.

It's not very often that we get to applaud another party, but I certainly want to take the opportunity to applaud the members of the NDP for supporting this motion. I believe it's the right thing to do, and it's certainly the right direction. I'm very delighted that they're seeing the things we need to do.

I'm going to take the opportunity to let the member for Perth-Middlesex speak on this issue because I know how strongly he feels from discussions I had with him just prior to now. I know he has a lot to add to this. I encourage all sides of this House to support this bill right through. We need to move on. At this time, I would like to share my time with the member for Perth-Middlesex.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I'm delighted to speak to the bill. I want to commend the members, particularly the two ministers, who spoke. It was many years ago that the Minister of the Environment and I went to the same high school, and I can tell you that she was a leader at that time.

I think, as the member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot said, you have to take tough decisions in this job. I can tell you, as someone who's known the minister for so many years, that she is more than capable of making those decisions. I know how happy the Minister of Natural Resources is, how proud he is, to stand in this House and actually do something so positive for his community, so forward-thinking.

The reason I want to speak to this bill is a question of the common heritage I have with the Minister of the Environment. Of course in her riding there is the community of Marmora. Marmora is the hometown of my wife, Loretta. Her father, Stafford, who passed away last year, actually worked as a security guard at the Marmora mine when it was open. It closed in 1978.

It was one of the largest iron ore deposits in southern Ontario. It was discovered by the geological survey just after the Second World War. It was owned by Bethlehem Steel. It is one of the largest holes I have ever seen. It's huge.

The iron in that facility was an open pit. The iron ore would be mined and then put onto container cars. It would go through my hometown of Trenton on its way out to Lake Ontario. Then it would take a laker to Bethlehem Steel in Pennsylvania. That mine closed in 1978.

Up until then, that mine was being pumped out. This is the point I want to make. Once they stopped pumping out the groundwater that was filling into that huge hole, it really became a lake. It reminds me of something that Robert F. Kennedy Jr said. Robert F. Kennedy Jr is an environmental activist of some renown on this continent. What he was saying at the time was quite simple: that an

open-pit mine that is not having groundwater pumped out becomes a lake. That's what it is. It's really a lake that's being pumped. If you have a hole that big in our natural environment, it's going to fill up. That's what's happening in Marmora. As a matter of fact, it's a tourist attraction. You can actually go out to the old mine site that was closed in 1978 and see this burgeoning lake as this huge hole fills up with water.

Could you imagine someone coming to us and saying, "What I want to do is take garbage and put it on a boat, take it out to the middle of a lake and dump it"? We wouldn't do that. We wouldn't allow people to do that. That is exactly what would happen at Adams mine unless the water were pumped out or, as the Minister of Natural Resources said, "If you actually used that pristine water under their proposal and constantly pumped out that water and treated the leachate that everyone agrees would come off 100 million tonnes of garbage."

I take my inspiration from Robert F. Kennedy Jr. I was reviewing a speech that he gave a few years ago in our province. He is a renowned leader about how we need to be active for the environment. What inspires him is this concept that we are just stewards of the land. I remember he was saying, "Environmental injury is deficit spending; it's passing the cost of our generation's prosperity and loading it onto the backs of our children." It's the same as deficit spending from a fiscal point of view. It's the same as deficit spending when you're not spending money on your infrastructure. It's also deficit spending to provide environmental injury to our natural resources.

He goes on further and makes what I think is a wonderful point: "There is a direct connection between democracy and the environment." In this House and in this bill, the will of the people is determining the fate of the Adams mine and all these other lakes. The will of the people is deciding whether or not we want that type of landfill to happen in this province. We're saying no. So it's the will of the people that's going to prevent that. It won't be the forces of the market that are going to prevent that. Oh, there's plenty of money to be made in these proposals, but it's the will of the people. So what Robert F. Kennedy said was, "There is a direct connection between democracy and the environment. The environment cannot be protected under a system that does not have democracy because the fishes and the birds and the environment can't vote, and they don't participate in the political process and neither do our children. The only way to give them a voice in the political process is by creating democratic mechanisms that allow people on the community level to speak up for them." I can tell you that our party, and I believe the New Democratic Party, heard loudly and clearly from the people what they wanted to have done in this matter.

1700

Mr Leal: They're with us in this matter.

Mr Wilkinson: They are.

"Where those mechanisms don't exist, you see huge environmental degradation. There is a direct correlation around the planet between the level of environmental

injury in specific countries and the level of tyranny." He goes on further to explain that when you look at the situation in the Republic of China and in the former Soviet Union, the environmental damage that's been done is going to be there for generations and generations because of the lack of a democratic process to rein in that tyranny. He goes on further to say, "One of the things that I've done over the past six years is to constantly go around and confront this argument: that an investment in our environment is a diminishment of our nation's health."

"It doesn't diminish our wealth. It's an investment in infrastructure, the same as investing in telecommunications, or road construction. It's an investment that you have to make if you want to ensure the economic vitality of our generation and the next." That's why I'm so proud to get up with my colleagues today, join in the debate and urge all of us in this House to vote for our children's future, to vote for what is best to protect our environment from tyranny, exercise our democratic right and vote for this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise today to make a few comments on the leadoff on second reading of Bill 49, the Adams Mine Lake Act. I was listening to the member for Perth-Middlesex, who said that we as a society wouldn't take our garbage out into the middle of the ocean and dump it in. We just wouldn't do that. The minister and the people at the Ministry of the Environment obviously feel that with the water that filters through the ground into the Adams mine, that that in fact is now a lake.

What really puzzles me about the act, along with all the things like the legal problems that I think exist with the act itself, is if you wouldn't dump your garbage out in the ocean and you certainly don't want to put it in the Adams mine lake, why would you put it in any parcel of land less than a hectare? Why would you do that? Why would you create a landfill anywhere at all where there is water? I simply cannot imagine why that part is in the act. You just don't mix water and garbage. I'll be really interested to hear what the explanation is. Why on God's green earth would you possibly do that? If you're interested in removing a mine from a landfill, why wouldn't you do anything? Why would anything exist where water mixes?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: Why did you do it?

Mr Dunlop: Don't blame the previous government. Give an explanation of why you would create a garbage dump, a landfill, out of any piece of land that includes water in it.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I've been listening to a number of the government members speak on this bill. Let me say first of all I'm glad that we finally see this legislation. As you will know, Speaker, there was some toing and froing in the Liberal caucus as to whether this was going to proceed and at what juncture it was going to proceed. I'm happy to see that this legislation has been introduced. But I'll be even more happy to see what I believe must be intimately attached

to this legislation. In the GTA section of today's Toronto Star the headline is, "Don't Dump On Us, Halton Pleads." Halton does not want Toronto's garbage, and in the continuing part of the story: "Nobody Wants Toronto's Trash."

The real challenge will be to see where this government goes from here. Will it pursue legislation with respect to reduction in a very serious way? Will it pursue legislation which mandates reuse in a very serious way? Will it pursue legislation which mandates recycling in a very serious way?

There's a part of this that hasn't been mentioned yet, and that part is that, ironically, there's a lot of money involved with garbage. The folks who wanted to promote the Adams mine site saw themselves making an awful lot of money. In the United States we know that, in fact, organized crime gets seriously involved in dealing with waste and garbage because a lot of money can be made there. So I'm interested to see how this government will deal with that aspect of it as well because some people do see this as a money-making opportunity. Thank you.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I'm pleased to have a chance to speak to the Adams Mine Lake Act, 2004 which, if passed, would ensure that the Adams mine would never be used as a landfill. Bill 49 is also an important part of our government's plan to create clean, liveable communities across Ontario by making some tough, forward-looking and responsible decisions about what we do with waste in this province. In communities like Etobicoke-Lakeshore, which is part of our Toronto community, we must include a waste diversion strategy, and this legislation is part of a package with this overall vision that aims to divert 60% of Ontario's waste from disposal by 2008.

The government strategy also includes a commitment to release a discussion paper to examine such things as setting province-wide diversion objectives; looking at what could be achieved by supporting and improving municipal blue box programs and increased composting; accelerating and expanding centralized composting in Ontario's largest municipalities; and developing a financing strategy for centralized composting, including cost recovery mechanisms and municipal revenue generation.

My own community, that of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, is a leader, in the fact that we divert a lot of waste. Each week we put out our blue box, we put out our grey box and we put out our green garbage can and what is left, which we hope to reduce constantly, goes to landfill. All the rest of that waste is diverted. It takes time to educate and inform each of our own communities to participate in this, but a government that demonstrates leadership will be able to do it.

As this is Earth Week in Etobicoke-Lakeshore, my colleague Donna Cansfield and I are also having a community challenge to clean up our communities. We'll be doing that this Sunday. In Etobicoke-Lakeshore and Etobicoke Centre, we support waste diversion and we support this legislation.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm really pleased to join the other members with respect

to dealing with the Adams Mine Lake Act, 2004. I want to comment on it from a different perspective. The other members have been talking about recycling and garbage, and I'd just like to deal with it from a point of legal protocol in terms of the rule of law.

I think Murray Campbell wrote in the Globe and Mail quite pointedly with respect to the rule of law being basically overridden by the Attorney General, and this act in particular. What's offensive about it is not only that it's retroactive in the sense that it makes sure that any cause of action against the crown is extinguished—and it is very rare that you'll see retroactive legislation brought in place to deal with the rights of taxpayers in this province. Essentially what's happened here is retroactivity; people who did have rights with respect to this particular matter have had them extinguished, and quite forcefully, I would say. No legal proceedings can be commenced, and anything that's out there is restricted to expenses.

That's unprecedented. I think it may have been done one other time—that was mentioned in the article—in this province. I think the NDP was the government at that time, which dealt with retroactive legislation in terms of extinguishing rights. I think it's a dangerous precedent in terms of the rule of law. In this province, it is a seldom used tool, but the balancing of taxpayers' rights, the rule of law and what people can expect from their government is certainly taken away by this particular piece of legislation. I think the precedent that is set here in terms of basically disregarding the rule of law in the way they've gone about it is something that we should be noting as legislators.

1710

The Acting Speaker: The government has two minutes to reply. I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: I'm very happy that we've had some very healthy debate on what I believe is a very important piece of legislation. We've heard from the Minister of Natural Resources, the member representing the area where the proposed landfill is located, the members for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, Northumberland, and Perth-Middlesex, and the responses, of course, from the members for Simcoe North, Kenora-Rainy River, Etobicoke-Lakeshore and Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford.

In just the brief time I have there are a couple of points I'd like to pick up on that were made during the comment time. We heard the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford speak about the rule of law. I would suggest that this government is not prepared to ignore the rule of nature that we believe takes some precedent in this particular situation. The member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford talked about a dangerous precedent. I would suggest to the honourable member that one of the most dangerous precedents that has been set during the tenure of the previous government with respect to the environment of Ontario was Walkerton. That is a precedent that this government will not turn away from. We will take

example from that, we will learn from that and we will do all that we can to ensure that our local environment is protected for the good of the people in the community and for the good of the people of the province of Ontario.

I'm very happy that my colleagues were able to reference such reputable names as Robert F Kennedy and David Suzuki, who, in reference to this particular proposal called it political terrorism. So this government is taking the responsible action, action that will fully compensate the proponent for his out-of-pocket expenses. I encourage all members of this House to support it wholeheartedly.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this particular piece of legislation, curiously titled Adams Mine Lake Act, and better known on this side of the House as the "no landfill in federal ridings act." I'll speak more on that later. I say "curiously titled" because before last week, no one realized there was a lake at Adams mine. They were under the impression that it was an open pit mine, an iron ore mine developed by the Dofasco corporation. But of course, we're all learning under a Liberal government that words and promises take on different meanings and they take on different definitions. For example, ask a Liberal in Ontario what a tax is.

As I hope to explain, the Adams Mine Lake Act is more than simply another example of the dictionary according to Dalton. It also represents, in my view, a draconian attempt to take away rights of Ontarians—we heard mention of that quite recently—robbing citizens of this province of their fundamental right of action in sections 4 and 5 of this legislation.

Further, the proposed legislation epitomizes the not-in-my-backyard principle, the NIMBY attitude that this government has displayed since it first arrived at Queen's Park. It does raise questions about the future. It raises questions about the future of Toronto and area waste disposal, questions that Premier McGuinty and Environment Minister Dombrowsky have underlined recently as they look for suitable sites or, as a number of people worry, opposition ridings and sites to serve as a dumping ground for Toronto's trash.

Time permitting, I also wish to discuss what's going on in Michigan. In the first government hour, I really heard no analysis of the impact and what's going on in the state of Michigan and what the people in Michigan think about this, through their elected representatives and the environmental organizations that are representing the people in the state of Michigan.

I also wish to make reference to other issues, like recycling, composting, and landfilling itself. I didn't hear a lot on recycling across the way.

Before I begin to expand on some of these themes, however, I will first attempt to trace the steps that have led us to today's debate, beginning with the first Adams mine landfill proposal. That was 15 years ago. It was in 1989 that the Adams mine site, located six miles south-east of the town of Kirkland Lake, was first proposed as a

possible landfill for Toronto's solid waste. That's back when the Liberals were in power.

Two years later, Bill 143, the Waste Management Act, 1991, was introduced by the then NDP government. The long title gives a little insight into how a discussion of or a look at that 1991 legislation has relevance today, the title being An Act respecting Management of Waste in the Greater Toronto Area and to amend the Environmental Protection Act.

In 1992, the standing committee on social development engaged in debate over this issue. I would like to touch on some of the arguments that were made during those committee hearings in the context of what I consider the power-grabbing legislation we're considering here today.

One of the presenters at the witness table was Bob Gray, past president of the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities. He testified on February 17, 1992, and Mr Gray addressed the committee as a proponent of the Adams mine recycling project, as it was known, and the related idea of Rail Cycle North. Mr Gray concentrated mainly on the economic potential of this proposal for northern communities, and I'll make reference to several pieces of his testimony.

"The Adams mine recycling project was the first opportunity to bring product north for secondary and tertiary industrial development and economic stimulation so that we could break out of this primary industrial and primary economic phase we are in which produces nothing but a boom-and-bust economy and raw-products-extraction industries." In many ways, that is a stereotype of much of what we continue to see in northern Ontario.

I continue to quote Mr Gray: "It would have had some significant impact on the transportation infrastructure, on the economic infrastructure and on the research and development potential that I think so richly reposes in the north."

Mr Gray continued, "All the elements for this agreement were in place. We had an agreement between the GTA and willing hosts. We had the support of by far the vast majority of northern Ontario. We had an agreement between the ONTC," the Ontario Northland railroad, "and CN in place. We also had an agreement that would have had a salutary effect on all the communities of the north, in that North Bay," for example, "... is presently," and again, we're going back 20 years, "having a terrible problem trying to find a landfill site—they found one; they cannot get it approved." So North Bay would have been able to access Rail Cycle North, and others would have been able to access the services of this proposal as well, according to Bob Gray.

Of course, at the time, the NDP government had already kicked off the omnipotent attitude toward this issue that we're seeing today with the present Liberals. In fact, during his submission, Mr Gray told of his frustration: "There has been no response to our charges of denial of due process ... by circumventing the Environmental Assessment Act in this case and by refusing to allow an EA review of the Adams mine project."

During these same hearings, a Liberal MPP, David Ramsay, had his response to Mr Gray's presentation. Again, with all due respect, he is taking the NIMBY approach on this issue, certainly in recent years. But his comments in 1992 seemed, in a sense, to find Mr Ramsay agreeing in principle with the former northern federation president Mr Gray. I'll quote MPP Ramsay from Hansard: "It seems to me this government is not looking at waste in the modern context you have put out before us today—as a resource.

"In the north we have to keep bringing the point home that this is a resource and as northerners it is now our turn to have a shot at developing it for the economic betterment of all of us in northern Ontario."

1720

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I do remember that.

Mr Barrett: You may have been sitting at the table. Times have changed, Ms Churley.

Today, the same Liberal Party of MPP Ramsay is trying to ram through an act that will take away that very "shot at development" that Mr Ramsay spoke so eloquently in support of.

A more recent measure of the Adams mine rail haul is described in a Northern Ontario Business article published quite recently, April 19 of this year. As I recall, it's quoting Mr Gordon McGuinty. He goes on to say that this project would be a huge economic boon to north-eastern Ontario. It would create 88 full-time jobs, provide 55 rail transportation jobs. The projected contract value, at minimum, over 20 years is \$1.1 billion, with landfill revenues coming in at \$575 million. Further, it goes on to say that rail revenues to the north would be \$160 million.

Very recently, Mr Gordon McGuinty put out a call for interest for heavy equipment rentals, general mechanical, mining, electrical, road building contractors, civil mining engineering services and aggregate crushing—all the things that would be needed to go forward.

The Keele Valley landfill is closed. Toronto now ships 1.1 million tonnes of trash to a subdivision in Detroit—actually to more than one landfill, as I understand. The majority of that garbage from Toronto ends up at Carleton Farms in Sumpter township. About 135 trucks a day carry 3,500 tonnes of trash from Toronto to Sumpter each day.

Again, in contrast to the efficiencies and fuel savings of rail haul, truck transportation, as we all know, does have some drawbacks—I think I'm putting that mildly—in comparison to rail haul. I would just like to present some information from communities that see this daily truck traffic fly by their doors from Toronto to the state of Michigan.

In the year 2000, Sarnia Mayor Mike Bradley said, "These garbage trucks bring absolutely no value to this community. The main issue is that Toronto should deal with its own waste." We've certainly heard that this afternoon. "There are already too many trucks on the road and if this garbage has to be transported, it should be done by rail."

London's Mayor Anne Marie De Cicco, "We frankly feel that if you have another 200 or 300 trucks (a day) without widening the lanes on the highway, it's going to have an impact and"—obviously—"an impact on traffic safety."

The London mayor is chairperson of the Southwestern Ontario Trash Coalition. This coalition has been pushing for Toronto to solve its garbage problem rather than shipping it to Michigan landfills. It's a coalition that includes Sarnia, Windsor, the county of Essex, Kitchener and Cambridge.

The mayor of London is quoted as calling the trash problem a "crisis that threatens to clog highways, create environmental risks and create more backlogs at the border."

Mayor Bradley of Sarnia even predicted that there will be Michigan legislation aimed at limiting what can be trucked across the border. This is concerning for me. Last year he stated, "They will craft legislation that will limit what can be taken across the border." He wasn't really too excited about the potential that move would have for the future of Toronto trash disposal. He felt that even a partial ban would trigger a chain of events that would see Toronto trash heading to area landfills. I know there's media today on the concerns in Halton region. He is reported as saying that filling area municipally owned landfills with Toronto trash is "a direct robbery of tax dollars" in those affected communities.

Ontario's mayors are not the only ones concerned. We'll take a look south of the border at a number of examples where elected officials oppose Ontario's trash convoy. The most recent example which can be found is Governor Jennifer Granholm, the Governor of Michigan, signing a package of legislation designed to curb the flow of trash into Michigan, just as Mayor Bradley had predicted. At the time, Governor Granholm told reporters and students, "Michigan's motto is, 'If you seek a pleasant peninsula, look about you.' It's not, 'If you seek a landfill, we have many available.'"

A year earlier, elected officials and area residents announced a petition drive aimed at stopping the importation of Toronto trash in Michigan. US Senator Debbie Stabenow said that they were sending a clear message with the petitions: "That Canada needs to take care of its own waste."

Even Democratic leader and presidential candidate John Kerry got in on the act, recently stating, "I don't like it.... We shouldn't import trash from other countries. I plan to review this issue in the first 120 days of my presidency." We're making some assumptions there in reading this quote, but I put forward to our minister: 120 days, possibly a future President of the United States. He's not going to give us 15 years. George Bush would likely suggest that Mr Kerry might be putting the cart before the horse. But I think it's pretty clear when we look at these comments—and there is some support and some confidence that Mr Kerry will be the next President of the United States. But as a whole, people in the United States, in Michigan, the mayors of the Southwestern

Ontario Trash Coalition, these elected representatives, really are not keen on continuing the truck trash border arrangement we currently have for Toronto's waste.

It again begs the question, if not to Michigan, then where? I think this was raised this afternoon by the leader of the NDP. The act we're debating today makes it clear that the trash is not going to Adams mine unless there is some kind of an unforeseen successful legal challenge. Obviously, it would never go back to the Minister of the Environment's backyard. It does leave us with that question, where is it going to go?

We all know that Toronto city councillors voted in favour of sending its garbage by train to an abandoned mine site in Kirkland Lake. At the time, when they voted in favour, the concept was considered to be safe and creative. However, the idea sparked a great deal of debate and, as we all know, eventually the deal fell through. The result: Toronto trucks its trash to Michigan. This was a decision made by a city that has something in the order of a 25% rate of recycling.

1730

One aspect of this problem that I identify is, in a sense, fence-sitting, in my view. The Ontario Legislative Assembly should be considering a different approach. We should consider the advantages of rail haul for non-hazardous waste and non-recyclable solid waste. We should be considering and debating rail haul to distant, environmentally sound landfills, given the NIMBY factor, a principle that is being encouraged by the present government of Ontario. Urban landfills located close to homes and businesses are certainly a documented source of nuisance odours. They impact on the quality of life of nearby neighbours. Long-distance rail haul disposal of appropriate waste will go a long way to alleviating these kinds of problems.

I'd like to make reference to the Northeastern Ontario Municipalities Action Group. In November 2002, this organization passed a resolution that recognized the ongoing need to ensure that rail infrastructure in the north remains viable. Some excerpts from the resolution: "The rail haul of solid waste represents an environment and economic opportunity that will result in strengthening the rail infrastructure." We go on: "The rail haul of solid waste has the support of the corporation of the town of Kirkland Lake, and will provide significant economic and environmental benefits to that community, Timiskaming and northeastern Ontario, including educational opportunities, green power generation," and again, as Bob Gray explained a number of years ago before that standing committee, opportunities for research and development with respect to waste disposal, landfilling and recycling.

This is not to say that environmental concerns should be ploughed under in favour of the almighty buck. Instead, what was called for, and what the Mike Harris government implemented after 1995, was a regulated process examining resource potential, with environmental protection as an overriding goal, taking into consideration safety aspects, health aspects and environ-

mental and economic aspects. In fact, this is the protocol that the present government and the present minister follow as well.

I do point out that in 1996, Notre Development went back to the government with an environmental assessment, seeking approval to develop one of the three Adams mine pits as a landfill. I remind the House that under this proposal, the landfill would operate as a hydraulic trap whereby groundwater would flow into the landfill. After an extensive government review, the Minister of the Environment referred the hydraulic containment design part of the application to the Environmental Assessment Board for approval in December 1997, and directed that a decision be made by May 1998.

Time permitting, I would like to run through a bit of the history of this process. The board conditionally approved the hydraulic containment design in June 1998 and, as a condition of the EA approval, the board ordered additional borehole tests to confirm the suitability of the hydraulic containment design. The board required that the director conclude without reservation that hydraulic containment will be sustained in the south pit of the proposed landfill such that the environment will be protected. A certificate of approval was issued under the EPA in April 1999. The proponent's groundwater tests, accepted by the ministry's technical staff, confirmed the value of the hydraulic containment design.

As can be predicted, the anticipated project ran into another brick wall in October 2000 when, again, as we will recall, after months of raucous debate, Toronto councillors chose to truck all the municipal waste—that's about 1.46 million tonnes per year, maximum—across the border to Michigan.

Fast-forward a few years and we see the Liberals continuing their confusing changes and flip-flopping attempts at giving in to NIMBYs—on many occasions the NIMBY movement does have valid claims—but giving in to a group while attempting to maintain the guise of government by the people in representing all people. It's bizarre. It's a sequence of events that we can trace. The Liberals went from an election promise of closing the door on Adams mine to opening it again and then slamming it shut when the promise breaker call that this Liberal government now answers to forced the Liberal government's hand to take unprecedented action—we heard this earlier today—that has stripped the rights of citizens in Ontario, not only legal rights but property rights.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): There are no property rights.

Mr Barrett: I hear a good point from across the way. We in the province of Ontario do not have property rights. That was taken away by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Hon Mr Caplan: It never existed before.

Mr Barrett: It did exist before. I recall a private member's bill of eight years ago to attempt to restore property rights to the province of Ontario. I voted for it because I introduced the legislation.

After spending the previous month telling anyone who would listen that they would halt all development at Adams mine pending a full review of the project, the new Liberal government, once in power, turned around and issued a draft permit to drain Adams mine. That was just about 30 days after taking office. The permit set the stage for Adams Mine Rail Haul to begin pumping 25 million litres of groundwater out of the pit, the iron ore mine, every day for up to two years. When this draft proposal was posted for public comment on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry, more than 23,000 written submissions were received. This was for the draft permit to take water.

I would note that in the middle of February, the ministry was estimating that it would take months and months to review 23,000 written submissions—several months—and yet in a matter of two months, the minister was able to draw up and introduce legislation that made the recommendations and comments of 23,000 people moot.

How is it, Minister, that you could wade through 23,000 submissions, review their commentary and also do the legal legwork and research in drawing up the rights-removing act we're debating today? I suspect not all submissions were taken into consideration. I think that much of this decision had already been made. Again, I leave that for people to jump to their own conclusions—introducing draconian legislation and essentially, in my view, rendering the EBR process as nothing more than a public relations exercise.

At the same time the minister announced the Adams Mine Lake Act, she also announced her commitment to release a discussion paper this spring to consult on options for the 60% waste diversion target, including greater recycling—to date we've heard very little discussion on recycling from government members—developing new markets for recycled materials—very important—increasing organic diversion; composting; examining the expansion of central composting facilities—I doubt the minister is thinking of Adams mine for a central composting facility—and the role of new technologies. This is all to the good.

Again, what is the point of a discussion paper if the government is going to simply go ahead and prove that they're not that concerned about what people are submitting to them by ramming through the kind of legislation we're talking about today? In my view, it flies in the face of the much ballyhooed commitment to democratic renewal, ignoring the public and, as we now know, taking away their rights to legal action. But again, we're learning. It's a new approach in this particular government.

1740

I've given you a bit of history, time permitting. I hope this would serve as a bit of background for some of the themes that I wish to touch on in my opposition to this proposed legislation. As you've already heard, I feel that this legislation is a direct result of the Liberal government buckling under to NIMBY attitudes, the not in my

backyard attitudes that ensure they can maintain their pristine view of their immediate surroundings, ignoring the well over 100 tractor trailers of Toronto trash barrelling down to the state of Michigan every day.

If you take a look at the Environmental Bill of Rights registry, which goes back to 1990, you will not see any Liberal legislation. The NDP and the PCs did the heavy lifting on introducing legislation. I could not name a Liberal environmental bill. I ask the minister to throw a name back, help out here. Maybe Ms Churley can name a Liberal piece of environmental legislation.

Interjection.

Mr Barrett: I didn't hear. I can't think of one that's been—

Interjection: The Adams Mine Lake Act.

Mr Barrett: I can't think of one that's been passed.

Interjection: You're inciting Jim Bradley.

Mr Barrett: We can't remember. Can anybody here name a Jim Bradley environmental bill? Anyone have a title? I see about 15 Liberal members here. I've got about 30 minutes to speak. I'll give you 30 minutes to name one Ontario Liberal piece of environmental legislation, one Liberal bill.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): They've got this new lake one. They're not going to fill the lakes any more.

Mr Barrett: One that's passed.

Let's go back. The Ontario Liberals were in power previous to their present reign. We have half an hour. Get the researchers going and let's get the name of a piece of Liberal environmental legislation. I can't think of a Liberal bill. No one else here can as well.

Interjection: The Kyoto Accord.

Mr Barrett: Provincial Liberals.

Very clearly, Ontario Liberals are new at this game. They're new at the environmental game. They have no legislative track record. The minister has half an hour to present the name of a bill.

There's one concept that maybe those of us who have been involved in the environmental movement for the last 30 years will know. It's the acronym NIMBY, and it goes back to the 1980s.

Mr Murdoch: What does NIMBY stand for? Liberal?

Mr Barrett: What does NIMBY stand for? It stands for not in my backyard. A NIMBY, and I use that term respectfully, is a person who seeks to keep some dangerous or unpleasant feature out of his or her neighbourhood. As we know with so many issues, whether it's alcohol and drug issues, landfill, heavy industry or airports, NIMBY problems are ubiquitous, certainly with respect to locating landfills.

There is another term. I don't know whether the government members opposite are aware of some of these terms. The term is NIMTOO. I could throw out the question: What does NIMTOO stand for?

Interjection.

Mr Barrett: No, that's the wrong answer. Again, none of the Liberals know what NIMTOO stands for. It's an acronym well known in the environmental movement.

I feel NIMTOO could actually, now that I think of it, apply to Minister Ramsay and to Minister Dombrowsky. NIMTOO is an acronym for "not in my term of office." As you can see, a NIMTOO, with all due respect, is a political NIMBY: very skilled in diverting the attention from the real NIMBYs, who are themselves. They use their political clout. A NIMTOO, for example, would use their political clout as a cabinet minister—we could say their "we say so" power—to make sure that landfill goes some place other than their own or their constituents' backyards.

These expressions are catchy phrases that really exemplify the politics of self-interest so prevalent within the various environmental issues, certainly the issues that we are aware of in North America and throughout Europe.

Of course, everybody wants a solution but nobody wants it in their backyard. We're seeing developing support for wind-generated green power; at the same time, we're seeing objections to wind turbines. Almost anywhere is somebody's backyard.

There is one other expression I'll throw out. You'll have to excuse me; I used to teach environmental science, so I get a kick out of trying to pass on a bit of information. I'll leave one last label with you and then I'll leave this alone: the expression LULUs. What's a LULU? LULU is a term used for locally unwanted land uses which applies not only to dumps but to other issues—airports, for example.

Hon Mr Caplan: You don't have any of those in Owen Sound.

Mr Murdoch: No LULUs.

Mr Barrett: What don't you want in Owen Sound? What don't you want?

Mr Murdoch: Nobody wants the garbage.

Interjections.

Mr Barrett: Mr Speaker, if I could interrupt for a minute, I'd—

The Acting Speaker: I'd like to ask all members of the House to allow the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant to relate his comments to the House.

Mr Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to sit down for a minute. I don't know why, in my right mind, I agreed to speak for an hour on this issue.

We have some cabinet ministers here today. If we take a look at our newly learned acronyms, we have cabinet ministers who have earned their political NIMBY stripes, if you will, or should I say their NIMTOO stripes.

Early on in this session, our minister here rushed to ensure that the environment ministry's appeal of a court decision ordering broader terms of reference in the environmental assessment stage of the Richmond landfill expansion was revoked. This was revoked soon after she took office. In fact, I think this was revoked the day our minister took office.

This Adams Mine Lake Act further entrenches our minister in the political NIMBY club, along with the previously mentioned Minister of Natural Resources.

When he realized which side of the fence he was on, the story has it, I'm told—or I understand—he threatened to resign.

Mr Murdoch: I don't think he knows what side of the fence he's on.

Mr Barrett: Well, I think we know now. I guess you can pass a law and it makes your position a little more clear. I understand he threatened to resign if this mine proposal went ahead.

There is little doubt that while this government is in power, Liberal backyards will be landfill-protected. The question remains: In whose backyard will Liberals choose to dump trash? Premier McGuinty has made it very clear that we need more landfills. He has taken on that responsibility. He has put that mantle on his broad shoulders. What Premier McGuinty—

Mr Murdoch: Peterborough; send our garbage there.

Interjections.

Mr Barrett: I hear references to my riding, and I can also give you some research on the inadvisability of that. When push comes to shove, we're all NIMBYs. Anywhere you go in Ontario, you're going to face local opposition to the location of waste disposal facilities. In many cases—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Caplan: What's your answer?

Mr Barrett: Two words: Adams mine. If Hansard didn't catch the question, Adams mine and rail haul are something worth looking at. Of the people who will oppose this government's move in creating new landfills, many will have valid concerns. However, waste does not just disappear; it doesn't just go off to another country. It must go somewhere, and I will state that not all of it will be recycled.

1750

On April 6, 2004, the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, Mr Ramsay, announced the government's plans to put forth the Adams Mine Lake Act. I'm coming up to recent history. At that time the member stated, and I quote, "This will mean no other community will have to go through what we went through." Mr Ramsay went on to say that of course this will stop the Adams mine once and for all.

Again I raise the question, how does this legislation ensure that no other community may be subject to a landfill site? Garbage must go somewhere. There's a great deal of merit in composting and recycling. There will continue to be objections, and I offer a bit of warning to the government on this one in particular now that this government has adopted the principle of NIMBYism.

The same day that Minister Ramsay made the announcement, Charlie Angus, Public Concern Timiskaming, said that the Adams mine has changed the politics of garbage in Canada. I agree. We're back to the ongoing raucous debates of the NDP era, those times of the Interim Waste Authority—tough stuff. I'm suggesting to government members, hang on to your seats. You're in for a rough ride.

One other thing: We don't need to read the Toronto Sun. The Northern Daily News did an interview with Kirkland Lake Mayor Bill Enouy. He stated the well-known fact that the Adams mine never was, never will be, a lake.

Mr McMeekin: Why don't you read the dictionary?

Mr Barrett: Again the dictionary is being rewritten. Again words are being redefined as we speak.

Mayor Enouy also said, "I can't believe Mr Ramsay would come to New Liskeard to make this announcement and not include Kirkland Lake or even give us forewarning." The mayor continued by saying that the government will be compensating the owners of Adams mine, and since the town of Kirkland Lake has also spent a great deal of money, time, as well as effort on the project—and this goes back to 1989—they want and deserve compensation as well. We've opened up a bit of a Pandora's box here, I'm afraid.

Everyone keeps telling us we have to diversify our economies in northern Ontario. Since the late 1980s, the town of Kirkland Lake has made a concentrated effort to be in the environmental solutions field. We all know and understand that siting for waste treatment and disposal plants has become a very controversial issue. Over the concerns lies ensuring the safe and efficient management of these facilities, and in the participation of the community in monitoring the operation. Again, fair and equitable compensation is in order.

So far in our debates today, government members did not address the Michigan issue. What this government is failing to publicize is that the citizens of Michigan, notably a network of what I would refer to as waste activists, believe Toronto garbage should be dealt with in our country and in our province, not in the United States. There is a group that call themselves Don't Trash Michigan. They say that Michigan's trash issues are worsening due to the increased amount of waste it imports not only from other states, but from Ontario.

In a Globe and Mail article titled "Toronto's Trash Raises Political Stink in US," journalist Jeff Gray visited the Carleton Farms landfill I made reference to previously, the landfill in Sumpter township. I have not visited that landfill, but he paints a picture for us: "Almost everyone who lives here immediately asks why Canada—land of open spaces—needs to send so much of its

garbage to a dump in Michigan." The people there say the dump smells. It smells like rotten eggs, and it's especially pungent on hot summer mornings and can waft across the countryside for miles. His article goes on to say that many people worry about water in their wells and say the garbage trucks clog their main road and cover it in mud and dust from the dump. There's an environmental group that distributed lawn signs that cover the country roads that the trucks use to go to the landfill. One large wooden homemade billboard reads, "Don't Trash Michigan."

These are some of the headlines on the front lines of a political battle between the waste industry, and in this case we're dealing with Republic Services Inc—people will know it's a major waste disposal company that runs Carleton Farms—and an array of state and local politicians and environmentalists. Toronto and Canada are caught in the crossfire, and this country's name is being dragged through the mud.

Interjections.

Mr Barrett: Worse yet, Speaker—

The Acting Speaker: Would the member take his seat. Order, please. We have about one minute and then I'll be able to adjourn the House.

I recognize the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant.

Mr Barrett: Worse, if this campaign being waged both in the state capital of Lansing and in Washington is successful, Toronto could be forced to scramble for another place to put its garbage. One example of the tone of the debate is the trash-o-meter they have over there. It reminds me of the spend-o-meter that we used in a previous election. It's a piece of political gimmickry cooked up by the Democrats in the state's House of Representatives. Again, it displays in real time the growing number of tons of out-of-state trash being shipped to Michigan: including Toronto, all told, \$2.3 million. This trash-o-meter is adorned with garbage bags, trash cans and Molson Canadian beer logos, with a sign that reads, "To Michigan, Love, Canada." Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. It being 6 o'clock, I now adjourn this House until tomorrow at 1:30 pm.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Wednesday 21 April 2004

Mercredi 21 avril 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 21 April 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 21 avril 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I would like to take this time allotted to me today to draw your attention to the issue of children's mental health. Children's mental health services in Ontario are simply not meeting the requirements that exist; 18% of children under 19 have a diagnosable mental health disorder. We only have the capacity to serve about one in four of these children. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15- to 19-year-olds in Canada. This tragedy must be addressed. When children with mental health disorders go untreated, the problems don't go away. They only get worse as the child grows into adulthood.

The Phoenix Centre for Children and Families in the city of Pembroke in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is currently facing a funding crisis as it tries to cope with the growing demand for children's mental health services in Renfrew county. Because of a lack of funding, the waiting times for children and youth to access services has become so long as to essentially deny them the help they need when that need is most critical. Without new investments now, more and more children will fall through the cracks today. Sadly, many will re-surface as adult cases tomorrow.

Our party pledged significant new investments in children's mental health services last year. I call on the new Minister of Health and the Minister of Children's Services to commit to adequate funding in the upcoming budget. Our children are depending on you.

CALABRESI CANADIANS

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): As you know, a great number of the Italian immigrants who helped build this province have come from the Calabria region in southern Italy. In fact, we have four or five members in the Legislature who have their roots in Calabria, including the Minister of Finance, the member from Thornhill and others. This is a very special week for Calabresi who are here in Toronto and the GTA. This weekend in Woodbridge, we are going to see La Fontata for the first time in Canada. It is an Easter time cele-

bration that takes place in small villages in Calabria. It is going to be brought to Woodbridge this Saturday. It's going to involve Immaculate Conception Church and St Margaret Mary Church in Woodbridge. I invite all Ontarians to partake in this wonderful festival.

We also have another group, from Vibo Valentia in Calabria, who are here as professional interpreters and are going to be visiting the Legislature today. They're going to undertake an English exchange program along with the Federation of Calabresi of Ontario. I say thanks to the Calabresi Canadians. Viva Calabria, viva Italia, viva Canada.

BSE

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): As I rise in the House today, I would urge all members to look on their desks to find a copy of this statement with an "I Love Canadian Beef" bumper sticker attached. You'll see it here.

A couple of weeks ago, while driving to Toronto from my riding, I noticed that although these bumper stickers have been in circulation for quite some time, very few cars and trucks have them on their vehicles. This was especially disappointing as I drove through Grey, Bruce and Dufferin counties, three regions that are highly dependent on their agriculture industry. As I approached vehicles on the highway, I expected to see the stickers as a sign of support for our ailing agriculture industry, but they were very few and far between.

I know that some people might be of the attitude that this is just a sticker and is not going to help solve the BSE situation, but what it can do is raise awareness and act as a conversation starter. This issue needs to be kept on people's minds. People need to continue to pressure their federal member of Parliament to get the border reopened. Today I would like to put out a challenge to all members to take the sticker that has been provided and place it on your bumper or car window.

Further to this topic, on May 7 from 11 am to 5 pm, I will be hosting an event at Barry's Service Centre in Rockford. At this time, the president of the Grey county cattlemen's association, Mr Ross Laycock, and I will be cleaning people's windshields and offering to place these stickers on their bumpers. The local 4-H club will also be on hand grilling up burgers. I would challenge all other rural members to hold a similar event.

These stickers are also available in my constituency office in Owen Sound. I will personally take the time to

apply a sticker on any constituent's vehicle if I'm in the office when they come in.

HOSPITAL WORKERS

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): Hospital workers in this province had a very difficult time over the last eight years. There's no question that they were overworked and unappreciated by the previous government. We heard nurses described as Hula Hoop workers and no longer necessary, yet they continued to do their job with pride, even with lower numbers. The service provided to this province is probably best exemplified by their service to us during the SARS crisis.

We've seen lab technicians toil through the eight difficult years, where the results that they determined from tests were of vital importance to our citizens.

Quality health care requires good building maintenance. We've seen our maintenance staffs in our hospitals ensure that the oxygen flows and the heat's on in the building.

Health care is so much more than just doctors and nurses. Clerical staff, the first encounter you often have in the hospital, are a tremendous service.

Food preparation: Quality health care requires food that's nutritious and attractive. We've seen that delivered.

Cleaners: In our hospitals it is a fundamental fact that the buildings need to be cleaned. They're often unsung heroes who ensure our hospital are in the condition that they are.

There are other support staff whom I omit inadvertently, but we have been truly blessed with the quality of people in Ontario who serve in our hospitals and provide the front-line service to our patients. So I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of myself and our government to say "thank you" to the hospital workers in Ontario.

BEACHES EASTER PARADE

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It is indeed my privilege and honour to stand here today to talk about a cultural institution in the Beaches, the Beaches Easter Parade. This year was an absolutely terrific year. It is the brainchild of the Toronto Beaches Lions Club.

There were tens of thousands of people who lined Queen Street, from Victoria Park all the way to Woodbine Avenue. The parade was led off by our very own grand marshal, Frances Lankin—no stranger to this House. She was well received by all of the crowds and is truly an inspirational person in our community. The parade director was Douglas Ferguson, who masterminded the entire parade and saw that it went off without a hitch.

There were floats, bands, marching groups, bagpipers and travelling minstrels. There were assorted politicians as well, and they didn't get booed all that badly. There was, of course, the Easter bunny, and lots of chocolates for the kids.

It took over two hours to traverse the entire parade route and people lined up literally for hours to make sure their children got a good seat. Tens of thousands of people watched it. I will tell you, it is a showcase for our wonderful Beaches community. People come from Toronto and indeed some from other places in Ontario just to experience the very unique flavour of the Beaches community.

I thank the Toronto Beaches Lions Club for another job well done, and to all of the people who came out, please come back again next year. It keeps getting better and better.

1340

BRUSH-A-MANIA

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): Wednesday, April 21, 2004, has been proclaimed Oral Health Day in the city of Toronto. This will be the fourth year that the Toronto Academy of Dentistry has worked with the Rotary Club of Toronto—Don Mills to organize Brush-a-Mania.

Each year an Ontario Dental Association member dentist and a Rotarian have gone to a local elementary school to talk to the students about oral hygiene. All of the students across Toronto then brush their teeth simultaneously for three minutes. The students record each time they brush their teeth for three minutes over the following six weeks and receive a Brush-a-Mania Club member certificate upon completing 100 brushings. Over 85 schools and 30,000 students will be participating this year.

I'm sure all members will join me in wishing Dr Raffy Chouljian, chair of this year's event, and all the volunteer dentists and Rotarians great success in the 2004 Brush-a-Mania.

There's no question the children of Toronto will have brighter smiles on their faces today, in part due to Brush-a-Mania and in part due to the great victory of our Toronto Maple Leafs over the Ottawa Senators last night. Bring on the toothpaste and bring on the Philadelphia Flyers. We'll clean our teeth, we'll clean their clocks and our children's smiles will be bigger and brighter in Toronto as the Toronto Maple Leafs go for the cup. Brush, kids, brush, and go, Leafs, go.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): My statement today involves the ability of small businesses in Ontario to continue to grow and prosper. This government in six short months has cancelled \$4 billion in tax decreases that would have benefited both individual taxpaying citizens as well as many of Ontario's small business owners. This government's economic position seems to be that higher taxes on small business create jobs and prosperity.

As I know this House is aware, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has strongly opposed the

elimination of Bill 140, which allows municipalities to increase small business taxes all over Ontario. It seems that this government's position is that the CFIB is wrong on this issue and that your higher-taxes-lead-to-economic-growth strategy is better thought out than their lower-taxes-lead-to-economic-growth strategy.

The small businesses in my community and around Ontario want to know that in the budget of May 18 this government is not going to develop a pattern of raising taxes on the backs of small businesses to pay for their many campaign promises. The future of Ontario's economy depends on your answers.

INTER-CULTURAL NEIGHBOURHOOD SOCIAL SERVICES

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): During National Volunteer Week, I congratulate the volunteers of ICNSS, Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services of Mississauga.

Each year, ICNSS has more than 360 volunteers contribute more than 40,000 hours of volunteer work. The agency and its volunteers serve newcomers to Canada throughout Mississauga and Peel region.

ICNSS staff and volunteers help immigrants and refugees settle and feel welcome in Canada. The ICNSS client base is now at more than 30,000 clients, 85% of whom are immigrants and refugees. That number continues to grow through the benefits of the efforts of ICNSS volunteers.

Newcomers gain experience in a Canadian work environment and integrate into the Canadian cultural mosaic. Programs and services offered through ICNSS include Peel Community Mediation Services, job search workshops, multicultural settlement and education partnerships, the host program, day programming for seniors and preschool programming.

Volunteers come from across the spectrum in our community, and I have personally had the opportunity to volunteer my own time with ICNSS.

I extend the Legislature's thanks to all volunteers at ICNSS for their hard work, dedication and compassion to others.

HIGHWAY TOLLS

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Dalton McGuinty promised to roll back tolls on Highway 407, a promise that was echoed by the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Finance. They specifically promised that regular weekly users of the 407 would save between \$160 to over \$1,100 a year as a result of this Liberal promise. Ask Minister Takhar today how things are progressing on that promise. We all know the answer. He is not progressing, and it won't happen. The fact of the matter is, he's hired a number of outside lawyers because he didn't believe the answer that his own civil service was giving him. So we ask the minister, where are those loopholes that you say are in the contract?

Mr Takhar wasn't willing to negotiate in good faith, and as a result of his tough-guy approach there was actually a toll increase. And as a result of this minister's mishandling of this file since I last raised this issue, users of the 407 are paying \$1.8 million more for that highway. Not only will the Liberal promise to roll back the tolls not be taken, the fact of the matter is that Dalton McGuinty and his Minister of Transportation will be remembered for increasing the tolls on Highway 407. Shame on them; one more broken promise that they can point to and the people of Ontario will not forget.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Members may observe that in our east gallery we have the Honourable David Peterson, former Premier of this great province, MPP for the 32nd and 33rd Parliaments. We welcome you.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated April 21, 2004, of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE PATRIMOINE DE L'ONTARIO

ONTARIO HERITAGE AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

M^{me} Meilleur propose la première lecture du projet de loi suivant :

Projet de loi 60, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le patrimoine de l'Ontario / Bill 60, An Act to amend the Ontario Heritage Act.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Minister?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur (ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones): Je prends la parole à l'Assemblée aujourd'hui pour dire que le patrimoine de l'Ontario est menacé et que le gouvernement McGuinty compte prendre des mesures pour remédier à la situation.

I stand in the House today to say that Ontario's heritage is at risk and that the McGuinty government is proposing to do something about it.

The Speaker: It's my understanding that you will make your statement as a minister later on.

1350

ONTARIO RECREATION FACILITIES ASSOCIATION ACT, 2004

Mr Brownell moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr4, An Act respecting the Ontario Recreation Facilities Association.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 84, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

LOI SUR LE PATRIMOINE DE L'ONTARIO

ONTARIO HERITAGE LEGISLATION

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur (ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones): Je prends la parole aujourd'hui devant cette Assemblée pour dire que le patrimoine de l'Ontario est menacé et que le gouvernement McGuinty compte prendre des mesures pour remédier à la situation.

I stand in the House today to say that Ontario's heritage is at risk and that the McGuinty government is proposing to do something about it.

The current Ontario Heritage Act is weak and outdated. For the first time since the Ontario Heritage Act was introduced in 1975, the provincial government is proposing comprehensive amendments to bring Ontario's heritage legislation in line with leading jurisdictions in Canada and around the world.

Aujourd'hui, nous présentons des modifications à la Loi sur le patrimoine de l'Ontario qui changeront sensiblement la façon dont l'Ontario perçoit et protège son patrimoine.

Des bâtiments et des lieux patrimoniaux uniques et irremplaçables disparaissent à un rythme alarmant sur les assauts des bulldozers et des boulets de démolition.

We pay the price in lost economic potential and the erosion of the cultural identity that defines and enriches the quality of life in our province. Without strong and expanded heritage protection laws, valuable heritage resources and the opportunities they represent will continue to be lost.

In Ontario's communities, our heritage is reflected in landmark buildings, small-town main streets, historic

neighbourhoods, scenic landscapes, archaeological sites and many other unique and special places, including aboriginal sites.

Le patrimoine de l'Ontario constitue le riche héritage que nous ont légué les générations passées pour que nous le protégions dans l'intérêt des générations futures. Notre patrimoine exprime notre expérience et nos valeurs collectives. Il reflète ce que nous sommes et montre ce que nous pouvons faire.

The McGuinty government values and is committed to conserving Ontario's heritage for the enjoyment and benefit of present and future generations. A stronger Ontario Heritage Act will prevent the demolition of Ontario's precious heritage land mass. A stronger act will also provide more tools and flexibility to protect local and provincial heritage and would make Ontario one of the leading jurisdictions in heritage conservation.

Nous avons écouté les avis des intervenants du domaine et les modifications que nous proposons reflètent ces avis. Voici certaines des principales modifications que nous proposons aujourd'hui à la Loi sur le patrimoine de l'Ontario.

Some key amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act we are introducing today include new municipal powers to prevent demolition of heritage buildings. This most important change will give municipalities tools to prevent rather than delay the demolition of heritage properties. This amendment will also ensure that increased demolition controls will be balanced with the landowner's right to binding appeal.

Une autre modification importante que nous proposons à la loi conférera à la province de nouveaux pouvoirs lui permettant de répertorier et de désigner les lieux patrimoniaux d'importance provinciale ainsi que de prévenir la démolition de ces lieux.

The proposed amendments also provide for clear conservation standards and guidelines to be established for provincially owned heritage property.

Other proposed amendments will provide greater clarity in the municipal designation process and provide better planning tools for protection of heritage conservation districts.

La loi modifiée accroîtra la protection accordée par la province aux lieux patrimoniaux maritimes les plus importants et vulnérables.

The amended act will increase provincial protection for the most significant and fragile marine heritage.

There are also enhanced provisions to conserve unique archaeological resources, such as increasing fines for the illegal alteration of sites.

The amended act will also update provisions for the province's heritage agency to give them greater ability to deliver their mandate.

Les modifications proposées à la Loi sur le patrimoine de l'Ontario stimuleront la fierté des citoyens et des citoyennes ainsi que le développement économique local.

These proposed amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act will help build strong and vital communities and improve the quality of life for all the people in Ontario.

ROUGE PARK

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources):

For the second day in a row, it is my pleasure to stand in the House to affirm that this government is acting on its commitment to increase green space in the province, protecting more of our priceless natural heritage and contributing to a cleaner, healthier natural environment for the people of Ontario.

I'm proud to announce today that the province is transferring more than 1,400 hectares of provincial lands for the expansion of Rouge Park. With this transfer of land, we can say now with certainty that Rouge Park is the largest natural park in an urban area in North America: 50 square kilometres in area; home to hundreds of plant species, some of them rare; an important habitat for bird and other wildlife; rich in historic and cultural significance—and all of this right on the doorstep of millions of Ontarians.

The ambitious plan to assemble these lands into an urban natural area known as Rouge Park was launched in 1990 by former Premier David Peterson and then-Natural Resources Minister Lyn McLeod. So, Mr Speaker, as you have already acknowledged, it is very appropriate for me, 14 years later, to acknowledge the contribution of David Peterson and welcome him back to our Ontario Legislature.

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): He looks just as young today.

Hon Mr Ramsay: He does, to the member for St Catharines, absolutely.

Since 1990, the vision of what this park could be has attracted the support of all levels of government, numerous agencies, groups, organizations and surrounding communities.

The wide-ranging local interest and support for protecting this special area is reflected in the composition of the Rouge Park Alliance. The alliance is a voluntary partnership involving the municipalities in the Rouge River watershed, the province, the Toronto Region Conservation Authority, the federal government, the Toronto zoo, the Waterfront Regeneration Trust and Save the Rouge Valley System Inc. I want to acknowledge today the dedication and hard work of the alliance members. They've shown what can be accomplished when different groups and interests pull together to achieve common goals. My ministry remains committed to continuing its strong support and contribution as a key partner in the Rouge Park Alliance.

This government understands the important role of green space and natural areas to our quality of life, particularly here in densely populated southern Ontario. As I said in the House yesterday, we know that natural areas contribute to cleaner air, cleaner water and a cleaner environment. We know they contribute to healthier and stronger communities and a healthier and stronger economy.

The Greenbelt Protection Act, introduced last December, would provide us with the means to protect in-

creasingly precious green space in an area of southern Ontario that includes Toronto, Durham, York, Peel, Halton, Hamilton, the Oak Ridges moraine, the Niagara Escarpment plan area and the Niagara tender fruit and grape lands. As a key component of that proposed greenbelt, this unique natural area known as Rouge Park will be a permanent, sustainable legacy and a source of great pride for future Ontarians.

1400

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I'm very happy to rise today to speak about one of the jewels of Ontario, the Rouge Park. For those in the Legislature who are not familiar with it, it actually has a long history that all parties recognize. As a matter of fact, it was 1967 when the first 157 acres were donated to the Rouge Park. Not only that, but it was a partnership, one of the first partnerships established with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority to manage that land. All governments have contributed to it.

The enlarged park opened officially in 1995. People should know that in 1999 there was a significant contribution added to the park. There were 668 hectares added and another 32 hectares at the mill dam, with a total value of over \$26.3 million in that contribution alone to that specific site. That amounted to a total of over 11,600 acres in that particular area.

The lands were transferred to the Toronto Region Conservation Authority with the understanding that it would be a protected area and they would remain with the management as long as it was under their authority and that it could not be sold off.

As well, I'm sure all of you would like to know that in November 2000—I think we're seeing some of the response from that of the funds being utilized—there was \$100 million through the Living Legacy fund established for just such acquisitions. That fund from November 2000 was to be used to enhance protected areas for conservation, for youth and stewardship programs—all you have to do is look at the Rouge Web site to see the number of schools participating in that to know its benefit—to regulate areas and, most importantly, to acquire more natural areas such as the ones announced today. The acquisition would probably have been done through ELAP, the ecological land acquisition program, which the previous government had started.

Another program which was announced in 2000 as well was the natural areas protection program, where \$20 million was established for sites such as specifically the Rouge, the Lynde Marsh and a number of others, for which I hope we'll hear about programs later on.

Some of the things I hope the minister is looking at are: resolving problems such as the ones between the mountain bikers and the hikers in that area; establishing more funds for managing that specific site.

Lastly, one of the key things to do that would assist the Rouge is to move forward with the healthy waters, healthy fish program and protecting the headwaters of the Rouge. We're very thankful that there are another 1,400 hectares added to that site.

ONTARIO HERITAGE LEGISLATION

LOI SUR LE PATRIMOINE DE L'ONTARIO

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to respond today to the amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act and, I would say to the minister, preserving our heritage and our history. On this side of the House—it all began basically under the Conservative government, as you would know, in 1975. In fact, it continued throughout our mandate. In 2002-03, there was a broad policy that gave tax relief to people in applying to improve their properties that were historically designated. In fact, the amount was over \$6 million.

In my time on local council, I actually served on the local architectural conservation advisory committee. In fact, today I'm working with a group protecting old neighbourhoods in the community of Bowmanville. My riding is, of course, a historic part of Ontario.

The members of the committee, the LACAC committee—Janie Dodd as well as Mavis Carlton and, today's chairman, Vic Suppan—would all be impressed by this. But what is really missing here—once again, there is a lot of fanfare on this, but, quite honestly, there's nothing in their platform. It's a complete surprise. The only platform material I was able to find was that in 1999 they had a small page that said they would fund up to \$2 million of museum and heritage programs in Ontario.

What is completely failing in this commitment by the minister today to do the right thing is that she's not providing any resources to do the right thing. In fact, I put it to you that if you look at the history—and history is the greatest teacher—in this particular case, you should know that under the Peterson government, under their regime, Bill Wrye, Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, authorized the complete destruction of original land records, from 1947 to 1968. This was held in very serious concern by members of the heritage community at that time. So your legacy is lacking.

In the current statement the minister made today, there is no substance in terms of any funding for local advisory committees. The minister should know that at the end of the day this is a property rights issue. To force people and neighbourhoods into conformance without the appropriate tax policies is completely the wrong message to be sending. If you want to protect heritage, don't exempt the property rights of individuals; work with the community. I'll be happy to work with you, but, Minister, there's got to be some money in the budget. Speak to Mr Sorbara.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): This is indeed good news—I'm talking about the heritage. Demolition control has been requested by municipalities for years and years.

C'est une bonne nouvelle. Notre expérience à Toronto et dans toutes les autres villes de cette province est une expérience de frustration. We have been frustrated as we helplessly watched our heritage, our history, being demolished and razed to the ground. We have been powerless. All we could do is delay; we couldn't stop. Today

there is the first inkling that we will actually be able to stop the demolition of our heritage.

I want to commend the minister, and I want to tell you that if this had been in place when we were going through all the machinations around the first Parliament, it wouldn't have taken a year; it would have taken a few minutes in order to save that priceless property.

There are two things I want to bring to your attention, and I hope they are not only in the bill when we finally see it but also in the regulations. First, you have said there is a right to appeal; you haven't said to which body. If that is to the OMB, I do have some frustrations with that body, and I want to tell you that probably many members in this House do. If it is not—and even if it is—you have to have the strongest possible provincial policy statement that will override all the other statements that are before the OMB, because if they are to be mixed, then I will tell you they will pick the developer over our history. The second thing we need to have is some commitment to money in the budget, because the cities have been downloaded unmercifully. They do not have the money to be equal partners, to pay to protect our heritage and to adopt standard designation procedures which should be uniform across this province.

Madam Minister, we salute your first step. We are hoping the additional steps will make this a bill we can all support and of which we can all be proud.

ROUGE PARK

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I rise to respond to the Minister of Natural Resources' announcement and, with all of us here, to welcome former Premier David Peterson to the House. I'm sure he would agree with me that former Premier Bob Rae should be seated by his side today in the gallery. You will recall that in 1990, just before the election, the then Premier Peterson announced a plan to acquire this land. Then there was an election—remember?—the Bob Rae government won, and we proceeded to buy up that land and turn it into a park. I just wanted to remind you. I thought that was conveniently left out today.

Indeed it is true, and it is good to see that the present Liberal government is following on the work we did on the park and extending it today, and I congratulate them on that. It's more green space that will benefit all of us.

The minister mentioned the greenbelt legislation, and I want to come back to that. I asked him a question in the House on the Castle Glen development in the Niagara Escarpment area. I want him to talk to his colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs, because he will not respond any more to questions about this development, the first new town to be built on the Niagara Escarpment since the 1970s, when protection was brought in for the Niagara Escarpment. It's going to be built. It's before the OMB, and not only that, but maybe for the first time in history—I don't know—the OMB has decided to deal with this particular development plan in a piecemeal fashion, which is just beyond the pale. It is absolutely outrageous and shouldn't be allowed.

1410

The minister says he can't comment because it's before the OMB. He indeed can comment. He can bring in a minister's zoning order to stop all development, to stop the hearing and, in fact, to bring the Niagara Escarpment into the greenbelt legislation. I'm a little confused about a line in the statement today, because right now it isn't a part of it, otherwise this development wouldn't be allowed to go ahead.

I'm calling on the minister today, if this commitment to the greenbelt and to expanding parks across this province, which I applaud—I think it's great, I think it's good, I want to move forward and get that greenbelt legislation passed so we can make necessary amendments and move on with it. It's very important. But there are some real problems with it. That Castle Glen development is one. As you know, some leapfrog development in the Simcoe area is another. New highways are being built. There are certain things we have to look at. I hope the minister will stop that Castle Glen development dead in its tracks.

TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS JERSEY

Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know there have been many rulings that you have made about decorum in this House and what is and isn't appropriate to be worn, and I know there are many difficult days. Trust me, if anybody knows that, I do, as Premier of Ontario. But none could have been more difficult for the incumbent Premier of Ontario than last evening's hockey game, so I decided to lend a little bit of class to these proceedings.

On a point of clarification, Mr Speaker, I know the Premier will want to know that this is a gift from Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment and does not contravene the Members' Integrity Act.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is this on the same point of order?

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I would like to ask for unanimous consent for the Premier to put on the Toronto Maple Leafs hockey shirt.

The Speaker: First, the rule is that it not be a prop, and then I'd ask if we have unanimous consent that the Premier wear it.

I heard a no.

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): On the same weighty matter, I propose that by way of unanimity we introduce a bill in this House that will compel the amalgamation of the Maple Leafs and the Ottawa Senators. With that firepower and that goaltending, we could take on the world.

The Speaker: I'm sure the Premier will prepare that bill and present it to us a little later on.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I would like to ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of Legislative pages serving in the first session of the 30th

Parliament: Jennifer Barrow from Brampton West-Mississauga, Jessica Collins from Simcoe-Grey, Joanna Concessao from Don Valley East, Jordan Edwards from Timmins-James Bay, Michael Fattori from Durham, Kirsty Flemming from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, Conner Hodes from Perth-Middlesex, Conor Kyte from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Lachlan Montague—I'm sorry if I pronounced your name improperly—from Cambridge, Natasha Persaud from Eglinton-Lawrence, Sameer Rabbani from Scarborough Centre, Evgeniya Serdetchnaia from York North, Maggie Shi from Kenora-Rainy River, Joseph Singh from Scarborough East, Kristina Siversen from Etobicoke Centre, William Stransky from Algoma-Manitoulin, Adrianna Swart from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, Cassandra Weston from Trinity-Spadina, Kevin Wiener from St Paul's, and Sammy Woldeab from Beaches-East York.

They will be serving five weeks, from April 19 to May 21. Let us all welcome them.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. On Monday I asked you a very serious question on a matter that has to do with a very important issue of public safety related to the repair, inspection and maintenance of Ontario's bridges. On that occasion, you responded with a very glib, partisan and incorrect response, with the same look on your face as you have now, as though it's not important. I'm going to give you another opportunity to take on the responsibility you have as Minister of Transportation for the safety of Ontario's public and to stand in your place today and tell the House: Do you or do you not have a policy to deal with the safety of Ontario's bridges?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): Safety is our number one concern. I'm surprised the member for Oak Ridges is asking me this question. His was the government that actually downloaded the bridges on to the municipalities without giving them any tools to deal with it. Not only that, but they had absolutely no plan. They did the same thing with GO Transit. They took over GO Transit because they didn't have a plan to start with. That is what their government's record is. We are absolutely committed to working with the municipalities to give them the tools to deal with these issues.

Mr Klees: The minister should read his briefing notes. The fact of the matter is that there were 684 bridges downloaded and there are some 24,000 bridges in the province. I'm asking you to stop playing political games about downloading. I'm asking you to stop laughing about this very serious issue of safety in Ontario. What are you going to do to ensure that the safety of the people of Ontario is taken to heart? You may be playing to your

front-benchers and backbenchers on this issue. If a bridge collapses tomorrow, it'll wipe that smile right off your face. Tell us in this House today, do you or do you not stand for the safety and protection of the people of Ontario? Do you have a policy to deal with this matter in the province?

Hon Mr Takhar: I am surprised at the tone of this question. I want to know if these bridges started falling apart in the last six months, or have they been falling apart for the last eight and a half years? That government didn't do anything at all. We are absolutely committed to working with the municipalities and giving them the tools. We are going ahead and examining all the bridges to see what needs to be done.

Mr Klees: That's precisely why I'm putting the question to you, because as a result of consultation over the last number of years with municipalities across this province, we fully understood the problem. We fully understood that there was a safety issue and we agreed that we would put in place a policy that would deal with this issue. Rather than sit there and say it's not your responsibility when that first bridge collapses and there are deaths in this province—then it will be too late—stand in your place, assume the responsibility you have as the government and as the minister and commit to us now that you will deal with this issue. Tell us today, rather than playing this partisan glibness with this important issue.

Hon Mr Takhar: I want to assure the member for Oak Ridges that we take our responsibility seriously, but they never did it for eight and a half years. There was absolutely no consultation with the municipalities. When we met with them, they told us that they downloaded these bridges without giving them any tools to deal with them. We are working with them, and we will provide them with the tools to deal with it.

1420

TRANSIT SERVICES

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for the Minister of Transportation as well. The House will recall that about three weeks ago, with great fanfare and self-congratulatory enthusiasm, the government announced provincial funding for transit for the city of Toronto—a special deal for Toronto.

For some time the region of Waterloo has been planning and promoting a visionary light-rail transit project which would have enormous economic and environmental benefits for the 21st century in our area. My question is, why has the government cut a special deal for transit in Toronto and has yet to announce support for Waterloo region's LRT?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): Mr Speaker, I will ask the minister of infrastructure to address this issue.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): We make no apologies for supporting municipal transit in this province. I think you will see—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Caplan: No, GO Transit. We're in negotiation and discussions with the federal government on a range of transit options. In fact, I can tell you it's not just transit but will be a full transportation picture. Part of our plan is a greater Toronto transportation authority to co-ordinate the kind of investment we need.

I have met with officials from the region of Waterloo, I'm meeting with officials from Ottawa and we are coming up with a comprehensive transportation vision for this province. Unlike your government, sir, which downloaded transit on to municipalities and completely abandoned a provincial role, our government is taking a proactive approach to insuring that we get people in this province moving.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Mr Arnott put that question to the Minister of Transportation. Apparently we have a new Minister of Transportation. I'd like to go back to the original one on the same issue of the imbalance of Liberal regional transportation commitments.

There is a region in this province that is crying out desperately for funding that was committed by the previous government, and it has to do with the proposed expressway linking the Queen Elizabeth Way to the Lincoln Alexander Parkway. Minister, I'd like to ask you this question: Will you honour the 75% commitment of funding that we made so this important project can get on and actually come to fruition? Will you confirm that today?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. He passed it on to—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The minister passed the question on to the minister of infrastructure renewal. Maybe the minister could respond.

Hon Mr Caplan: I would say, to be fair, that the first question was about municipal transit and the supplementary doesn't have anything to do with the original question. But I will answer it because we are frankly very interested in talking about these issues. Unlike the previous government, which did download a lot of the problems on to municipalities and did not give them the ability to do it, we are committed to the Red Hill Creek Expressway. We have been very clear about that, and there should be absolutely no doubt in anybody's mind that this government remains committed to it.

I would say that we have incredible advocates in our caucus for Hamilton, and I would say to the member opposite that they could take a page out of the book from some of the members, past and present, in this government.

The Speaker: Second supplementary.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): When I was the Minister of Transportation, I can remember delivering cheques to Mayor Bob Chiarelli: \$13 million for new buses; \$19 million for new park-and-ride

stations; \$45 million for new arterial roads in the city of Ottawa.

It's embarrassing in the city of Ottawa. The city of Toronto has received significant help for their transit system. We have the minister, Jim Watson, saying "It's our turn now." Then he says, "It's coming soon." Then he says, "I'm not sure it's coming soon." When is Ottawa going to get its fair share?

Hon Mr Caplan: It is amazing that that member would even ask that question, given the history and the lack of support for the city of Ottawa when you were minister, my friend. That is an absolute joke. I want to assure you that I'm not going to pre-empt any announcements that are coming up, but there will be something very soon about a transit announcement for the city of Ottawa. I'm very proud that that's going to be happening. We are in negotiations and discussions. I've got to tell you, we will be there.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. It doesn't seem like the opposition is prepared to listen to the answer, so I'm going to ask for a new question.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. This is the report of the honourable Mr Justice Archie Campbell, the SARS Commission interim report. In it, Mr Campbell says that the government of Ontario was asleep at the switch on SARS. He said that it was a devastating breach of the trust that the people of Ontario put in their government.

Now, you have promised to move on some of the recommendations, but some isn't good enough. Mr Justice Campbell says that local public health units need your funding share for public health programs to increase from 50% to at least 75% of the cost of the programs.

Will you do the right thing today and commit your government to increasing your share of the cost of public health programs to at least 75%?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I want to thank the leader of the NDP for the question and take the opportunity as well to thank all those who have presented reports to the government. Let me say that we look forward to fully considering the very sound advice found within those reports.

We have not been sitting on our hands. We have, with respect to ensuring we have a more vigorous and robust public health care system in the province of Ontario, done a number of things. First of all, we've enlisted the leadership of Dr Sheela Basur, who's performing remarkably well, as expected. We have launched Canada's only mobile acute care unit, the first of its kind in the country. It can respond anywhere in the province within 24 hours. We have also created five rapid response teams that can be deployed anywhere in the province. We are finalizing a provincial pandemic plan, and the Minister of Health tells me that within the next

couple of months, he will be putting forward a more comprehensive plan to help revitalize public health for all Ontarians.

Mr Hampton: Well, I did not hear an answer. This is what Mr Justice Campbell says: "Increase the funding to 75%." This is what the report, which was received in December, says—this is the expert panel's number one recommendation—"Increase the funding to 75%."

This is not a difficult question. Mr Campbell says that this is not a debatable issue, that issues like SARS and other serious public health problems can arise again very quickly, because the system is so desperately underfunded.

I ask you again, Premier, will you commit to doing the right thing: Will you increase your government's share of public health programs to at least 75%? Make that commitment now.

Hon Mr McGuinty: I know the member would want to ensure that all the information, by way of the recommendation, was made available to the House. In that same report, it in fact reads beyond what the member has referenced. It reads as follows, "Implementation of the new cost-sharing agreement should be phased in within two to five years."

Justice Campbell has made it clear that public health has been neglected for at least a generation in the province of Ontario. The solution is going to take hard work and determination. It is going to take a little bit of time. We have already made significant steps forward. We look forward to taking all of these recommendations into consideration. As I said, we look forward over the next couple of months to putting out a comprehensive plan to revitalize public health for all Ontarians.

1430

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Premier: Ontario drivers are discovering that your motto "Choose change" means having their pockets picked by big insurance. They don't understand the McGuinty math when you tell them they should be getting a 10% decrease in their auto insurance premium, but then they open up the notice from the insurance company and it's a 15% to 20% increase. You said that notices after April 15, insurance that is renewed after April 15, will contain these reductions, but it's not happening. Can you explain the McGuinty math where your promise of a 10.2% reduction turns into a 15% or 20% increase in someone's auto insurance rate?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the Minister of Finance.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): The only person in this room who lacks credibility on auto insurance is the member from Kenora-Rainy River. He is the leader of a party that once proposed public automobile insurance, was elected to power and immediately abandoned it for all the right reasons. Once again, in the last election campaign, he proposed public automobile

insurance. That was uniformly rejected, appropriately, by the voters of this province.

I want to tell him once again that what we said during the campaign was that we would bring forward measures to reduce rates, as we inherited them, by on average 10%. As of April 15, a few days ago, 55% of the market has reported rate reductions. The average from that 55% of the market is precisely 10.15%.

Mr Hampton: I don't think the Minister of Finance is any better at McGuinty math than the Premier is. Yesterday, Premier, you stood up and you told people that those who have insurance policies with Pilot Insurance would get a 10.2% reduction. Well, here's Mr Keith Simpson of Simcoe. He heard your notice of a 10.2% reduction. Then he gets his renewal notice from Pilot Insurance and they say that, even though his insurance isn't going to be renewed until May 24, surprise, surprise, "You get a 17% increase in your rate." To add insult to injury, the renewal notice reads, "The insurance company has had a premium increase through no fault of your own," Mr Simpson, no fault whatsoever.

I ask you again, Premier: This is what you promised. He heard your 10.2% promise, but he gets a renewal notice saying a 17% increase. How does this math work?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I would be delighted if my friend from Kenora-Rainy River would send me over the details of that case. What the Premier said yesterday, and what I said yesterday, was that on October 23 we inherited responsibility for government. That date represented a high-water mark in insurance premiums after years of increases under the previous administration. We took action that day. The result of those actions means that virtually all of the market will be reducing their rates from what they were on October 23 by 10%. After that, in the second phase of our reforms, with greater competition in the market and the ability of consumers to customize their premiums, we expect yet another 10% reduction in insurance premiums. So we will have the best possible system on the continent.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Transportation, if he'll answer the question. If the minister had looked in his briefing notes, he would have seen that Ontario had its largest expansion of road construction and maintenance in many years under our government. In fact, he will have seen the commitment of \$1 billion a year for 10 years, \$10 billion of commitment to Ontario road construction, and we were two years into that program.

I'd like the minister to tell us today, after having completed dozens of major projects around this province and initiated many dozens more, whether he knows of decisions within his ministry to either terminate or intentionally delay any of those projects that have been currently underway?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I am not aware of any projects that are underway being delayed. But we are reviewing all the programs of

the ministry, and we're going to set the priorities that are right for the province.

Mr Klees: Really? Well, I think the minister should spend a little more time with his briefing notes because there are many of those projects, as we understand, around the province where direction has been given intentionally to slow down progress. I'm going to give him one: Oakville and Third Line and the QEW. In fact, there are some problems with the contractor as a result of an imposition of conditions put in place by MTO that will extend that project being completed by two years.

Minister, if you don't know about this one, how many other projects in your ministry don't you know about? What is the implication here to construction, what is the implication to the road-building industry in the province of Ontario, and what is the implication to gridlock in the greater Toronto area and right across the province?

Hon Mr Takhar: There are two things that are really important to us. One is safety on the highways. We're going to make sure that highways are designed safely, that any intersections are designed safely. We're just not going to go ahead in a piecemeal approach to this issue. The other is, we are going to handle gridlock, but we're going to handle it in a region-wide approach, and we're going to set up the GTTA to handle those issues.

SERVICES FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. As the minister is aware, there are many pressures facing programs and services for children and youth in Ontario. One such pressure that's threatening to affect thousands of children in my riding and area is the pressure our local region's children's treatment centre, KidsAbility, is under to continue providing needed services to children with disabilities.

I understand that years of funding deficiencies for these types of children's services under the previous government and the overarching budget deficit facing the province have created a great deal of pressure on your ministry, but can the minister tell the Legislature what actions she is taking to ensure that KidsAbility and other children's treatment centres can continue to provide the programs and services offered to children with disabilities in this province?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I'd like to reassure the member from Kitchener Centre that children's treatment centres are extremely important to the province. Our ministry acknowledges that. I would also like to thank him for his tenacity in pursuing this issue and other issues in his riding. In fact, my ministry is in conversation and discussion with KidsAbility in order to enhance the programs that are offered there. We will get back to you very soon about the results of those discussions.

1440

Mr Milloy: I'd like to thank the minister for her comments. KidsAbility is not alone in terms of organ-

izations dealing with children who suffered under the cutbacks imposed by the previous government. With your new mandate and ministry, can the minister tell the Legislature what steps she's taking to help children and children's organizations throughout the province?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: We have short-term and long-term goals. In the short term, we just relieved the children's aid societies of their \$80-million deficit. In exchange, we have letters of agreement that they will improve their accountability and their services to children. We're working with them to do that. We had given, for the first time in 10 years, the federal money that was intended for the last 10 years for child care to child care. As well, we have increased the spending for children with autism by \$40 million a year.

In the long term, we have to integrate the children's and youth services across all of the different programs across the province. Children's mental health, as you mentioned in the first part of your question, is part of this. The experts across the province are saying, "Yes, money is one issue, but lack of coordination and lack of integration is another."

If we can meet our goal of increasing domestic adoption from the children's aid societies, we can solve a lot of problems, because a lot of those children end up in our youth justice systems, and we can solve a lot of the problems on that end as well.

MID-PENINSULA HIGHWAY

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question for the Minister of Transportation: On September 26, 2003, your Liberal candidate in Erie-Lincoln, Vance Badawey, told voters that the mid-peninsula corridor had to be built immediately. Is that a true statement?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): Actually, I couldn't hear the question. Can he repeat it again, please?

Mr Hudak: My apologies. I think there was some heckling. I'm glad to repeat the question. Your candidate in 2003, Vance Badawey, campaigned for the Liberal Party, saying that the mid-peninsula corridor had to be built immediately. Was that a true statement?

Hon Mr Takhar: I think this question has been addressed in the House several times. We are committed to building the mid-peninsula highway, but we're going to go through full environmental assessment. This member has submitted those questions, and we have given him answers in writing as well.

Mr Hudak: The problem people in Niagara have is that your candidate said one thing during the election campaign and now, after the election, you're saying something entirely different in the Legislature. Does the Minister of Transportation believe that there is a demonstrated need for the mid-peninsula corridor?

Hon Mr Takhar: Actually, it's strange. There are two colleagues who sit there next to each other, and they both have different opinions about whether this highway should be built or not, but the whole purpose of the envi-

ronmental assessment is to make sure whether this highway is needed, when it's needed and where it's needed. That's why we are going ahead with the full environmental assessment.

FABRY DISEASE

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, I have a constituent who has a son who suffers from the rare Fabry disease. For the last 90 days, young Fabry patients have been receiving treatment free of charge from the company which provides Fabrazyme, the necessary drug, due to an arrangement with Ontario's hospital system. Unfortunately, the 90-day period is about to expire on April 25. This treatment would be extremely expensive for the parents to provide out of pocket, and I know my constituency office has been working with your ministry to try and resolve this situation.

The Kitchener-Waterloo Record reported that you would provide an answer within 48 hours, and the 48 hours are up. I wonder, Minister, what is going to happen with this drug?

Interjections.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): With all due respect for your instinct for partisanship, my answer was, of course, going to acknowledge that on this issue, as I said to the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, I clearly think that the region has been very well served by political representation from a variety of stripes.

What I'm pleased to be able to tell the House today is that we're also served by an active, good corporate citizenship in the announcement that I'm able to make, which is that the manufacturer of the drug has agreed to extend the period of compassionate provision without charge of the drug until reviews are completed. I'm pleased to be able to say that to the House today and to thank the four members who have all been very active on this file.

Mrs Sandals: Thank you, Minister. That's great news for my constituent and for the constituents of a number of other members. I'm sure the follow-up question I will be getting is, "What are the next steps in the approval process?" because they're going to want to know where this goes long-term.

Hon Mr Smitherman: The subject of this drug, Fabrazyme, as well as Renagel, another drug that is giving support to people with Fabry disease, is currently under an expedited review. We recognize that these drugs are providing extraordinary benefit to people in Ontario, but the scientific tests are of course crucial to the integrity of our process. I can tell the member and all members who are interested that we are reviewing it on an expedited basis and are looking forward to the opportunity to be able to have a product that will continue to provide relief to people who are challenged with Fabry disease.

ENERGY CONTRACTS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is to the Premier. Your hydro announcement the other day promises to bring back to Ontario one of the most unloved parts of the Conservative hydro scheme. That is the door-to-door electricity marketers, the shady hucksters who swept like locusts through Ontario, knocking on people's doors, trying to manipulate them into signing electricity contracts where the price was going to be much higher. If you remember, Premier, when you were on this side of the House, that's when we started receiving complaint after complaint of people being fed deceptive information, people being lied to, people actually having their signatures forged on hydroelectricity contracts. Premier, why you want to bring these hucksters, these manipulators, back to go after the people of Ontario once again?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Energy would like to speak to this.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): The plan is to have a regulated price that uses the assets associated with the original hydroelectric and nuclear to keep the price regulated. It is the studied view of those who have looked at this that there will be no opportunity for those retailers with small consumers. Where they will have an opportunity is with mid-sized businesses, small businesses and farmers, many of whom have advocated openly to have this kind of opportunity of arbitrage.

The second point the member should bear in mind is that we've also undertaken to look at the consumer protection aspect of this for those mid-sized businesses. I would suggest that the real lack of integrity on the question and the way it was put and the real huckster on this is the member opposite, who put the question in a way that completely ignores the announcement.

Mr Hampton: Coming from that minister, I consider that comment a compliment. Minister, I remember Jean-Marc Lalonde, the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, standing in this Legislature pointing out how people in his riding had actually had their signatures forged on these contracts. I remember that. I remember other members. I remember the Conservative Minister of Energy of the day saying, "Oh, our consumer protection laws are going to make sure this doesn't happen." This was rife across Ontario: people being lied to, people being fed deceptive information and people having contracts forged.

Can you tell us, what is the possible rationale for inflicting this kind of hucksterism and dishonesty on the people of Ontario once again?

Hon Mr Duncan: The member likely wasn't aware of the announcement. We are going back to a regulated price for small consumers. We're getting rid of the wholesale spot market for small consumers, unless that consumer chooses to stay on it. Therefore, there will be no opportunity for the kind of arbitrage that occurred under the previous regime with small consumers. There

will be an opportunity for larger consumers—and when I say "larger," I mean small businesses and others—who may want to take advantage of arbitrage and plans that can be offered for those larger consumption volumes, to take advantage of that. This government has proposed a regime and will bring forward legislation that has a regulated price, a default price for small consumers that will be stable, predictable and will ensure a reliable supply of energy, something that party never had the courage or the foresight to do.

1450

PHOTO RADAR

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is also for the Minister of Transportation. Your trial balloon on the NDP tax-grab photo radar is still floating around out there. Can you tell us today your position on photo radar?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): We are always interested in improving the safety of highways, so we are always prepared to look at any measures that will improve safety on highways. That's where this issue falls.

Mr Dunlop: I think I need to refresh the minister's memory on what two of his closest friends had to say about photo radar. On December 17, 1994, Monte Kwinter, your seatmate, and now the minister responsible for community safety—what I mean by "community safety" is the policing of school zones, construction zones, hospital zones and our highways and streets. This is what Mr Kwinter had to say in the *Toronto Sun*: "All it's really done has made the coffers of the treasury swell with amounts of money that are starting to verge on the obscene." And just this year, your Ottawa Senators Premier, Dalton McGuinty, told reporters on the cabinet scrum, "It's a revenue generator, absolutely." Do you agree with your cabinet colleagues that photo radar is just another way for you to pick the pockets of hard-working people in this province and that it's not about community safety?

Hon Mr Takhar: As I said before, we consider highway safety a top priority. I want to quote from what Mr Runciman said once: "Maybe we should take another look at photo radar in those areas to monitor that sort of thing, because police can't be there 24 hours a day and that's part of the problem." So I'm sure if he's going to listen to his colleagues, I am very delighted to listen to my colleagues.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Honourable John Gerretsen. During the October 2003 campaign, we made a strong commitment to bring forward a real protection for tenants, a commitment that was especially welcome in my own riding, the district of Etobicoke North. Yesterday, the minister made an im-

important announcement regarding changes to the Tory rent control system, including the suspension of the 2% component of the annual rent guideline. Can the minister tell us why he has taken this step and how this will benefit Ontario's renters?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): Yes, the member is correct: We will be introducing legislation that will, in effect, eliminate or suspend the automatic 2% base into formula that would normally go into effect in August of this year, during the time while we're going through consultation of the new tenant protection legislation that we want to introduce, and that consultation will take place in a number of forums, with stakeholder meetings, through e-line and town hall meetings. It's important to note, however, that this 2% time out—as we like to refer to it—will be in effect during the time that the consultation takes place. It does not affect the rent control index, which will still remain in effect for landlords to implement in the year 2005.

Mr Qadri: The minister will know that this announcement was welcome news in many quarters. Even the members of the third party—as yet unrecognized—congratulated the minister on this initiative. There has, however, been criticism that the real issue is the lack of affordable housing. What measures is the government taking to deal with the broader issues of tenant protection and housing?

Hon Mr Gerretsen: We are certainly encouraged that the third party will be supporting this legislation, because we realize that they feel it's a very important step as well. Rent control review is only one aspect of our comprehensive housing program. We're also looking at the 20,000 new housing units that will be brought on-line through the minister of infrastructure. We're looking forward to that. We will also be implementing, during our term of office, housing allowances for 35,000 needy families. We also introduced some time ago the rent bank of \$10 million, which will help needy families as well who are involved in emergency situations.

This government is committed to making sure there is affordable housing available for everyone, and the rent control legislation consultation process we're going through right now is only one part of that.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question today is for the Minister of Transportation. You will be well aware, Minister, that the design and engineering studies have been completed on the provincial highway between Arnprior and Renfrew. Would you commit now to a construction schedule for that provincial highway to Renfrew and beyond?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): As I answered before, we are looking at all our priorities. We will look at that highway as part of those priorities and determine whether it needs to be done.

Mr Yakabuski: I would certainly expect a little bit more of a timetable from the minister; however, that's

been about what we've been getting lately. But will you commit that that highway, when extended—if extended—by your government, will not be a toll road?

Hon Mr Takhar: We have already made commitments to the effect that we have issued some criteria with regard to tolls. We have said that we will not toll any highway that doesn't have an alternative route and we will take tolls off if the highway is paid off. We have also said that it has to be cost-effective and economically justified before we would put on any tolls.

ONTARIO YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

Mr Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): My question deals with the important role that education and training programs play for troubled youth. These are youth who may encounter systemic problems of poverty and unemployment if a solution to their alienation is not found. I therefore have a question for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. It is a sad and frustrating fact that there are many youth who do not comfortably fit into the secondary education system. These same youth either drop out of high school before they graduate or have no desire to advance to college or university programs.

I was reminded of this as I toured the Carpenters and Allied Workers Local 27, which is part of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America. During my tour, I was excited to hear about our government's commitment to apprenticeship training programs. This is just one example of the many programs that are available to exceptionally talented high school and college students in our province.

Minister, could you briefly explain what our government is offering youth who may not feel that a traditional education system is beneficial to their future goals?

Hon Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I thank the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale for that question, because I think it's really important that our young people recognize that there are programs for them, whatever their choice of career should be. We do have the Ontario youth apprenticeship program in place, and there are 13,000 young people in high schools in this program right now. They are involved in 70 different skill trades. The most popular are cooks, carpenters and early childhood educators. I'm pleased to say I have visited some of these schools and I've also seen young women who are in auto body mechanic work. We have a \$7-million budget for those programs this year. I would encourage all the young people of Ontario to see these as viable opportunities.

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IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): My question is also to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. The help of our government in providing for youth

to fulfill their potential is an important initiative, but if our economy is going to thrive we must help our internationally trained professionals reach their full potential. The issue of access to trades and professions for internationally trained individuals is not going to go away. These individuals need to be able to access their profession of choice for the benefit of themselves and for our economy.

Before the election and since forming the government, we have raised the issue of barriers that internationally trained individuals face, but now it is time to take action. Minister, what action are we taking to address this important issue?

Hon Mrs Chambers: Again, I'm very eager to let the people of Ontario know what programs are there for them. In January, I made an announcement of \$4 million for programs that will help to bridge the requirements that internationally trained individuals come to this wonderful province with against those requirements that the regulated professions and trades have identified.

We have approximately 120,000 people choosing Ontario as their home every year. Of those new immigrants, approximately 70% are coming in with post-secondary education. We don't want to lose those skills. Under my leadership, my ministry has been working with the 38 regulated professions, all the skilled trades, and we are committed to a report card within the first year of this initiative and we are committed to a variety of written programs for these individuals.

WATER QUALITY

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, on April 5 I faxed you a letter regarding the Pine Grove Trailer Park, which is a private trailer park in the unorganized community of Cartier in my riding. Your ministry officials have met with the owner, Judith Stojanovic, regarding her obligations under regulation 170. She has called me because she can't afford the tens of thousands of dollars to install a new water system, a treatment system and to pay for ongoing monitoring. The tenants in the 11 residential trailers that she has are on fixed incomes, so she can't afford to pass the costs on to them. She has no choice but to close down the trailer park and evict the tenants because she can't afford to meet the costs of the regulation.

My question to you, Minister, is this: Is your government going to pay the costs of the water upgrades in rural trailer parks so that tenants can stay in their homes?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I always take this opportunity, first of all, to say that this government is committed to ensuring that there are regulations in place so that Ontarians know when they turn on the tap that the water is safe. With respect to the particular situation in the Cartier community, I am familiar with it. It is a system that relies on surface water as opposed to groundwater. If it was groundwater, they

would have an additional year in order to comply. They do fall under regulation 170.

I've indicated on a number of occasions in this Legislature that regulation 170 is flawed. I've indicated that I have directed staff at the Ministry of the Environment to provide me with recommendations so that people in Ontario will be able to comply with provincial regulations and yet access safe water.

Ms Martel: Minister, your staff may be reviewing this matter, or you may be, but I can tell you that your staff are still asking trailer park owners to comply, and they're asking her for a response now. This is a really serious issue across northern and rural Ontario. We have owners who cannot afford to pay the costs associated with this regulation. Some may want to try to pass those costs on to the tenants, but given how high those costs are, we don't want them to do that. Many tenants in small trailer parks are on fixed incomes, so it's impossible for them to find an affordable place to live. Many of them have trailers that are fixed so they can't be moved to another location even if the tenant could find another location. This is an urgent issue for people in the Pine Grove Trailer Park. Is your ministry going to cover the cost of upgrades so these tenants are not evicted and can stay in their own homes?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: Ensuring that Ontarians have access to safe and clean water is an urgent issue for this government and we don't intend to turn away from that. I have asked staff at the Ministry of the Environment to bring me a plan that will enable people across rural Ontario and northern Ontario to be sure that the water they access is safe. We're talking about surface water. Surely I don't need to remind the member opposite what can happen when people don't access safe surface water. We are not going to turn our backs on the responsibility to ensure that water sources in this province are safe. The ministry will provide recommendations that will ensure that constituents like yours will be able to meet those regulations.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. For more than 20 years there has been talk of a new provincial highway between the cities of Guelph and Kitchener, replacing the existing one. This new highway is needed immediately for reasons of safety and the efficient flow and movement of traffic. It's an important part of our Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan. Minister, I know you've got a copy of it because I had a page send it over to you just a few moments ago. This plan is supported by our local municipal councils in Waterloo region and Wellington county. My question is, when will the minister commence construction on this new highway that we need so badly?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): The honourable member is right. He just sent me these details, and I think it takes about 10 years to

construct a highway. But let me tell you, I had the chance to go and visit the Kitchener-Waterloo area. I went there on January 28 to open the transit terminal in the honourable member's riding, but he wasn't there. I had the chance to discuss these issues—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Takhar: Actually, he was invited but he wasn't there.

I had the chance to discuss regional transportation issues with the council members there. We are having discussions with them. As time goes on, we will have our study formed on that front.

Mr Arnott: Another important feature of the Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan is the need for immediate repairs and upgrading of the provincial highway between Fergus and Mount Forest through my home town of Arthur. Again, I have twice raised the need for these highway repairs in this House since last October. Surely the minister is aware of this important issue. The county of Wellington passed a resolution months ago calling for the ministry's action to fix this stretch of provincial highway. Will the minister inform the House, when exactly will he fix this highway?

Hon Mr Takhar: I will check the schedule and get back to the honourable member.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Over the last six months, you have made substantial announcements in regard to affordable housing, and that has been good news for the communities that have benefited from that. But over the last week, we've seen article after article talking about the need for affordable housing, not just here in Toronto but throughout the province. When can we expect to hear more about affordable housing from your ministry?

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I want to thank the member for the question because affordable housing is a pressing issue and a pressing need in this province. After practically a decade of inaction, I was very pleased a couple of weeks ago to be here with the federal infrastructure minister, the Honourable Andy Scott, who heads up CMHC for the federal government, to have an announcement that was long overdue: some \$56 million in new projects in 13 communities, upwards of 2,300 units of affordable housing.

1510

I have some details. There were 102 affordable housing units in London, 105 affordable housing units in Kingston, 94 in Wellington county. Those dollars were languishing in the provincial treasury for many, many years. We unlocked them. We're taking responsible action to ensure that needy families have access to affordable housing. I'm working with my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on other pro-

gramming as well. It is an exciting time for affordable housing in the province of Ontario, and I thank the member for the question.

Mrs Van Bommel: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. It is true that a lot of needy families have had to fend for themselves while the previous government virtually ignored affordable housing. I know that our government has made a very strong statement regarding affordable housing. Minister, could you tell me what that would mean to the Ontarians who need that kind of housing?

Hon Mr Caplan: I'm delighted to, and I concur with the member's observation that it was a provincial disgrace that the former government had decided to abandon affordable housing entirely. In fact, those announcements that I just talked about, that commitment, is about eight times more funding and support for affordable housing than we saw over the last number of years.

Right now, my ministry is working with housing providers, with municipalities. We are prepared to work with members of the opposition who I know care passionately for the construction of affordable housing to turn that around, because this government is back in the affordable housing market. My colleagues and I are working with our federal colleagues to enhance the Canada-Ontario affordable housing agreement. The province will match, over time, the federal contribution. We look forward to being a full partner with—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. New question.

LEVEL CROSSINGS

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, recognizing that you do not invite the sitting members when you visit a riding, I'm not sure whether you have visited the town of Ingersoll in my riding.

The town of Ingersoll is divided by the train track running through the centre of town, with only level crossings to get across from one side to the other, so when a train goes through town and it stops or a mishap occurs, the emergency vehicles cannot get from one side to the other to help people in need.

The county of Oxford has sent you a business plan outlining the provincial financing needed in order to build an overpass over the railroad track to protect its citizens. Minister, can we count on your support for this project to protect the safety of the residents of our community?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I'm sure this need didn't just arise in the last six months; this need has existed there for the last eight and a half years. But safety is of paramount concern, and we will be prepared to look at anything favourably that improves safety in the province.

Mr Hardeman: We thank you very much for that comment. I do want to point out that this project has been

on the books for many years and the community has been working on it for some time.

Minister, 43 trains go through Ingersoll every day, so the residents find their safety in jeopardy frequently. As I said, this project has been on the books for many years. As time goes on, the people get more and more concerned that more lives will be lost because of the level crossings and no overpass over the tracks. Are you willing to let public safety suffer while you're taking your time deciding whether you are going to help the people?

Hon Mr Takhar: I am glad the member admitted that this project has been on the books for several years and they have ignored safety for eight and a half years, but what I said is that safety is our paramount concern and we are prepared to look at any project that will make the city safer.

CERTIFICATS DE NAISSANCE

M. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): Ma question est pour le ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises. On a rapporté que le Bureau du registraire général de l'état civil avait des difficultés à délivrer des certificats de naissance en français avec les accents. De nombreux francophones de ma circonscription ont exprimé leur inquiétude à ce sujet.

Monsieur le Ministre, que comptez-vous faire afin de vous assurer que le Bureau du registraire général puisse délivrer des certificats de naissance avec les accents sur les mots français ?

L'hon. Jim Watson (ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises): Merci à mon collègue le député d'Ottawa-Orléans. C'est un jour historique pour moi, parce que c'est ma première question en français ici à l'Assemblée législative. Ça me permet aussi de pratiquer la langue de Molière avec ma professeure de français ici, M^{me} Meilleur.

L'ancien gouvernement a mis en place un système afin de produire des certificats de naissance, et c'est incroyable que le système était incapable de fournir les accents sur les noms. Le gouvernement McGuinty ne pense pas que c'est acceptable, et je suis très fier aujourd'hui d'annoncer que mon personnel au ministère a corrigé le problème.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

Applause.

L'hon. M. Watson: Maintenant, quand les francophones demanderont un certificat de naissance, ils pourront le recevoir avec les accents. Notre gouvernement est en train de corriger les autres—

The Speaker: Thank you. I want to give the member a chance to ask his supplementary, because I had stood up before the clapping. Supplementary?

Mr McNeely: Merci, monsieur le Ministre. Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'm satisfied with that response, and I have no further question.

PETITIONS

TILLSONBURG DISTRICT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition signed by hundreds of my constituents and by constituents from ridings around mine.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital has asked for ministerial consent to make capital changes to its facility to accommodate the replacement of a satellite dialysis unit; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has already given approval for the unit and committed operational dollars to it; and

"Whereas the community has already raised the funds for the equipment needed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care give his final approval of the capital request change from the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital immediately, so that those who are in need of these life-sustaining dialysis services can receive them locally, thereby enjoying a better quality of life without further delay."

I affix my signature to this petition.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the parliamentary tradition in Ontario of presenting annual budgets in the House of the Legislative Assembly has existed for decades; and

"Whereas the previous government in 2003 showed disrespect for our public institutions and the people of Ontario by presenting a budget inside a private, for-profit auto parts factory; and

"Whereas the previous Speaker of the Legislative Assembly condemned the actions of his own party's government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to uphold parliamentary tradition and hold a public presentation and debate of the 2004 budget, and every budget thereafter, by our publicly elected members of Parliament inside the legislative chamber."

I'm happy to affix my own signature.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Sudbury Regional Hospital is a regional referral centre, serving patients from across northeastern Ontario;

"Whereas the burden of raising money to pay the local share of the hospital reconstruction costs has fallen primarily onto local residents;

"Whereas city council and local residents have already committed more money to the project than we were required to;

"Whereas imposing a private mortgage scheme on the hospital to pay more costs at the local level would be disastrous for patients, hospital programs and staff;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the Liberal government to fund 85% of the capital costs of reconstruction at the Sudbury Regional Hospital."

I agree with the petitioners, and I have affixed my signature to this.

HIGHWAY 518

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition from the constituents of Parry Sound-Muskoka. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Highway 518 between Highway 69 and Highway 11 serves the residents of the communities of Haines Lake, Orrville, Bear Lake, Whitehall and Sprucedale; and

"Whereas Highway 518 is in a deplorable condition; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has previously assured local residents of its intention to upgrade and improve Highway 518;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We request that the Ministry of Transportation immediately proceed with the reconstruction of Highway 518 between Highway 69 and Highway 11."

I support this petition and sign my signature to it.

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ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the parliamentary tradition in Ontario of presenting annual budgets in the House of the Legislative Assembly has existed for decades; and

"Whereas the previous government in 2003 showed disrespect for our public institutions and the people of Ontario by presenting a budget inside a private, for-profit auto parts factory; and

"Whereas the previous Speaker of the Legislative Assembly condemned the actions of his own party's government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to uphold parliamentary tradition and hold a public presentation and debate of the 2004 budget, and every budget thereafter, by our publicly

elected members of Parliament inside the legislative chamber."

I've signed my name to this petition, as I agree with it.

TAXATION

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present petitions from people at the Crystal Beach Tim Hortons. I know this issue has had some developments, but I would like to still read their petition. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas every day, 1.5 million Ontarians, including seniors, health care workers and students, purchase a basic meal that costs less than \$4; and

"Whereas a new 8% tax on such meals will disadvantage low-income Ontarians; and

"Whereas adding a tax for the first time on a glass of milk, a salad, a bowl of soup or a cup of coffee will affect a total of 1.5 million Ontarians each and every day in restaurants and cafeterias across the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not impose a new 8% tax on basic meals under \$4."

Beneath Sharon Guilmette and Dan Knutt's signatures, I affix my own.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I have a petition.

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government has made a commitment to the Canadian Federation Of Students to freeze tuition fees for at least two years; and

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government has also promised students that this tuition freeze will be fully funded; and

"Whereas the increases in federal transfer payments to the provinces for post-secondary education have not kept up with inflation and today comprise a smaller portion of the Canadian health and social transfer fund than they did in 1995; and

"Whereas today federally-funded programs for post-secondary education is about \$3 billion less than what it would have been had funding not been cut ...; and

"Whereas the federal underfunding"—this print is getting smaller—"... makes improving access to and enhancing the quality of post-secondary education ...;

"We, the undersigned"—these are over 2,000 students from Carleton University—"call on the federal government to immediately inject \$3 billion into the Canada health and social transfer for post-secondary education and request that these monies be accounted for separately through a post-secondary education fund."

I affix my signature to this as well.

TAXATION

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas every day, 1.5 million Ontarians, including seniors, health care workers and students, purchase a basic meal that costs less than \$4; and

"Whereas a new 8% tax on such meals will disadvantage low-income Ontarians; and

"Whereas adding a tax for the first time on a glass of milk, a salad, a bowl of soup or a cup of coffee will affect a total of 1.5 million Ontarians each and every day in restaurants and cafeterias across the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not impose a new 8% tax on basic meals under \$4."

It's signed by a significant number of my constituents, most of whom are residing in the New Hamburg area.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): A petition that I have to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the parliamentary tradition in Ontario of presenting annual budgets in the House of the Legislative Assembly has existed for decades," if not centuries; "and

"Whereas the previous government in 2003 showed disrespect for our public institutions and the people of Ontario by presenting an budget inside a private, for-profit auto parts factory"—I believe owned by Belinda Stronach—"and;

"Whereas the previous Speaker of the Legislative Assembly condemned the actions of his own party's government"—

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Is that part of the petition, or did you just make that up?

Mr Wilkinson: I'm just clarifying, Mr Hardeman.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to uphold parliamentary tradition and hold a public presentation and debate of the 2004 budget, and every budget thereafter, by our publicly elected members of Parliament inside this legislative chamber."

I'm very proud to affix my name to this petition.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to read this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I'm pleased to sign my name to that.

SENIOR CITIZENS

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): The riding with the longest name because our people have the biggest hearts and the biggest hopes and the biggest dreams.

They keep coming in. The Joan Faria petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To immediately commit to action and funding to ensure the rights and protection for our senior citizens living in nursing homes and retirement homes in Ontario."

I'm pleased, along with member Hardeman, to submit that.

TAXATION

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition here and it's about the tax on \$4 meals. I know the Premier has already announced that he's not going to do it, but these people signed the petition with the expectation that I would present it here in the Legislature on their behalf. So I will do that, Mr Speaker.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas every day, 1.5 million Ontarians, including seniors, health care workers and students, purchase a basic meal that costs less than \$4; and

"Whereas a new 8% tax on such meals will disadvantage low-income Ontarians; and

"Whereas adding a tax for the first time on a glass of milk, a salad, a bowl of soup or a cup of coffee will affect a total of 1.5 million Ontarians each and every day in restaurants and cafeterias across the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not impose an 8% tax on basic meals under \$4."

All these people signed this because they're totally opposed to the tax.

GO TRANSIT SERVICE

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the city of Mississauga has, within a generation, grown from a linked collection of suburban and farming communities into Canada's sixth-largest city, and tens of thousands of people daily need to commute into and out of Mississauga in order to do business, educate themselves and their families and enjoy culture and recreation; and

"Whereas gridlock on all roads leading into and out of Mississauga makes peak period road commuting impractical, and commuter rail service on the Milton GO line is restricted to morning and afternoon service into and out of Toronto; and

"Whereas residents of western Mississauga need to 'commute to commute,' driving along traffic-clogged roads to get to overflowing parking lots at the Meadowvale, Streetsville and Erindale GO train stations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Transportation and highways, instruct GO Transit to allocate sufficient resources from its 2004-05 capital budget to proceed immediately with the acquisition of land and construction of a new GO train station, called Lisgar, at Tenth Line and the rail tracks, to alleviate the parking congestion, and provide better access to GO train service on the Milton line for residents of western Mississauga."

I am especially pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

1530

WATER SERVICES

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I have a petition on rural community water testing.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the riding of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock is made up of many small communities; and

"Whereas not all citizens live in larger cities such as Toronto, where access to municipal water service is taken for granted; and

"Whereas smaller communities have little, if any, access to municipal water services; and

"Whereas Ontario's smaller villages and hamlets are home to many community buildings such as churches, community halls and arenas; and

"Whereas those responsible for halls, churches, arenas and other community facilities take pride in ensuring these buildings have access to the highest quality potable water;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the implementation of regulation 170/03 as it relates to community halls and similar facilities be delayed; and

"That the province of Ontario ensure halls, churches, arenas and other public facilities on private wells comply with water safety standards that are reasonable and appropriate."

This is signed by many people in my riding.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the parliamentary tradition in Ontario of presenting annual budgets in the House of the Legislative Assembly has existed for decades; and

"Whereas the previous government in 2003 showed disrespect for our public institutions and the people of Ontario by presenting a budget inside a private, for-profit auto parts factory; and

"Whereas the previous Speaker of the Legislative Assembly condemned the actions of his own party's government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to uphold parliamentary tradition and hold a public presentation and debate of the 2004 budget, and every budget thereafter, by our publicly elected members of Parliament inside this legislative chamber."

In the spirit of parliamentary democracy, I'm very pleased to affix my signature to this petition also.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations

for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on source water protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I'm pleased to sign my name to this.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE), 2004 LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (CONGÉ FAMILIAL POUR RAISON MÉDICALE)

Mr Bentley moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 56, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family medical leave and other matters / Projet de loi 56, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour raison médicale et d'autres questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr Bentley.

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I will be sharing my time with the members from Kitchener Centre, Sarnia-Lambton and my parliamentary assistant, the member for Oakville.

I am pleased to take part in the second reading of the proposed Employment Standards Amendment Act, involving family medical leave. This bill would, if passed, provide real, positive change for all of the people of Ontario. Specifically, it would provide positive change

for Ontario families, for employees, for businesses, for those involved in giving care and, of course, for those who are in need of care. It will allow employees to take up to eight weeks of unpaid but job-protected leave to look after a family member who is in the last stages of life. This is a development that has not been seen in the legislative history of this province. It is an extremely important development and will provide a very positive change for those giving the care and those most desperately in need of it.

Long ago, we stood as a society and said we were going to support people in the happy times of life; we were going to support them at the beginning of life, with maternity and parental benefits. This is a statement by the McGuinty government that we are prepared to stand with people in the difficult times of life. We are prepared to stand with employees and support their caregiving obligations; we are prepared to stand with those who need the care, and to support them at the most difficult time of life, the end of life.

This legislation would provide eight weeks of job-protected leave so that a caregiver could look after their mother, their father, their son, their daughter or their spouse during the end of life. This legislation will protect people's jobs while they provide the care they must to those closest to them.

Comme j'ai dit l'autre jour, on ne devrait pas avoir à choisir entre perdre son emploi et demeurer au chevet de son père, de sa mère ou de son enfant qui se meurt. Une société humaine et bienveillante n'imposerait pas un tel choix, et en tout cas, ce gouvernement ne le fera pas.

This bill would recognize that our society, which is unfortunately not becoming younger, must do more to support its citizens at the end of life, the difficult times of life. It must support families by making it easier for family members to take the time to provide care or to support a loved one in their final days. Helping a dying loved one exacts a heavy toll upon family members. There is a tremendous emotional burden, the burden of seeing your father or your mother or your child in pain, the burden of knowing that they will soon be lost to you. That burden is made the greater when you are not able to take the time to be with your loved one during those last stages of life, not able to take the time because you cannot afford to lose your job, not able to take the time because you are forced to make the impossible choice: your job or to be with your loved one.

It is not too much to ask that caregivers be relieved of the burden of having to worry about their job at that very difficult point in time. Choosing between a job and caring for a loved one in the last stages of life is not a choice that a caring society asks people to make, and it is not a choice that this government will ask people to make.

Apart from the emotional burden, there is a very significant financial burden on people who are faced with this impossible choice between their job and looking after their loved one. Taking care of a seriously ill loved one can put immense strains on people. There was a

recent study of terminally ill cancer patients, a Statistics Canada report that look at terminal cancer cases in 2002. What that study found was that 40% of the caregivers placed in that impossible position with that impossible choice had to quit their jobs; 40% of people faced with a loved one in the last stages of life made the choice to be with their loved one. They chose the impossible choice. As well as the burden of losing a loved one, they were faced with the burden of losing their job. That is unfair, that is not right, and that is not a choice that the McGuinty government will force people to make. That study also indicated that 25% of caregivers had to give up all or most of their savings to look after a terminally ill loved one—25%, all or most of their savings. Once again, they lose everything. They lose their loved one. They lose their job in many cases. They lose their savings. As I said before, a society that is prepared to stand with people at the happy times at the beginning of life must now stand and help people at the difficult times, to support their decision to be with their loved one when the loved one is near the end of life. That is only right. It is just, it is proper, it is what we must do, and it is what the McGuinty government, with this bill, will do and will accomplish.

1540

Ontario leave is unpaid, much as other benefits in the Employment Standards Act which provide for leave are unpaid. But this leave has two aspects to it. It was designed to dovetail with the changes to the federal Employment Insurance Act. As members are aware, the changes to that act, which came into force January of this year, provide up to six weeks of employment insurance benefits for caregivers, following a two-week waiting period, to help ease the financial strain when they take time off work to be with their loved one who is in the last stages of life. That eases the financial burden. But except for federally regulated employees, the federal Employment Insurance Act changes do not protect the job. So for most Ontario workers, we have the financial benefit but no job protection. This act will make sure that job protection exists for those workers who would otherwise qualify for employment insurance benefits.

I might add that in designing this legislation, in determining the form it would take, we were certainly mindful of the requirements to qualify for employment insurance benefits. We were mindful of the medical certificate that is required for employment insurance benefits, because doctor certification would qualify employees for employment insurance benefits and the same certificate can be used for the job-protected leave under this legislation. There is a matching of the federal benefit with the leave that would be provided and protected with this legislation. With respect to the medical certificate, that is a requirement of the leave, but if it's not available when the leave must be taken, it can be provided afterwards—as soon as possible, but afterwards, because there are going to be situations where leave must be taken on an emergency basis.

The question might be asked, does this apply to part-timers? The answer is yes. Every worker covered by the

Employment Standards Act will be eligible for this leave. Unlike the 10-day emergency leave provision in the Employment Standards Act, which only applies to those whose employer has 50 or more employees, this benefit applies to every worker in the province covered by the Employment Standards Act.

The question might be asked, what if the worker doesn't qualify for employment insurance but is covered by the Employment Standards Act? This legislation would protect that worker's job while they take time to be with their loved one in the loved one's last stage of life. So this has even greater inclusivity than the federal employment insurance benefits legislation.

It's obviously good for employees. What about employers? What about the effect on businesses? In fact, this legislation will help businesses. What is not often understood is the cost that businesses bear through absenteeism, absenteeism caused by caregivers who have to take time off work to look after terminally ill loved ones. What is that cost? It has been estimated that the direct costs of absenteeism due to caregiver strain are \$1 billion a year in Canada. Indirect costs are another \$1 billion to \$2 billion a year. Businesses are already paying a very heavy price.

How do you relieve that price? It is thought, and it is sometimes suggested, that this will impose a burden of cost on employers, but in fact, when a worker has to quit to look after a terminally ill loved one—and the study cited shows that 40% do—the employer loses that worker's training, knowledge, skill and their knowledge of the production. There is an unplanned disruption of production.

This bill will encourage a more productive, long-term planning process. It will enable employers to do what the overwhelming majority either do or wish to do anyway, which is to help people in difficult circumstances. So this, in fact, is good for businesses as well as employees.

What about caregivers? Obviously this legislation is good for caregivers because it relieves them of that terrible choice, that impossible choice.

What about those who need the care? What about those who, in their last difficult days, would want to have those nearest and dearest to them close at hand? This legislation will make sure that can happen. Palliative care studies indicate that three quarters of people would like to be at home during their last difficult days but only a quarter are actually able to be at home. This will provide a means to accomplish the person's wish.

It's estimated in studies that 36% of people in their last days have to go to institutions because they don't have the care available at home and they can't remain at home. Our government is committed to making sure that, over the course of our mandate, we have greatly expanded home care. This will augment that and help people who are terminally ill be where they wish to be during their last few days.

1550

It is suggested, and it has been suggested by some opposite, that it doesn't do enough, that we should do more. I stand with those who suggest that the well of

compassion should never be full. But before the McGuinty government introduced this piece of legislation, there was no family medical leave benefit. Before the McGuinty government took this initiative, there was no benefit. No such benefit was introduced during the past nine years. For those who would suggest that this bill somehow does not look after others, I again join with those in saying that the well of compassion should never be full, but I also ask that all members listen carefully to the words of those who would criticize this bill because it might not do enough, and to ask the ones who might speak those words, what did they do when they had the chance? Did they introduce a family medical leave bill? No. Did they look after anybody else? No. Did they show the compassion they now seek from this government? No.

The fact of the matter is that words are easy, but words without action are like candles without wicks: They do not illuminate the way we must take. This government will light the way with this legislation. This government will show a more compassionate side to the people of Ontario than they have seen in the last nine years. This government will fulfill its commitment to look after employees when they're faced with that impossible choice of keeping their job or looking after a loved one. This government will stand with employees, employers and those who need the care and deliver on its commitment with the family medical leave bill.

In conclusion, as the—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Bentley: No, no—lots to say about this. There is so much to say about this and so many people who would like to speak in support of this piece of legislation. I know some of the members opposite are very anxious to join in the debate and speak in support of this. I am looking forward to hearing what they have to say about this piece of legislation, because once again, of course, it is legislation the likes of which we have not seen in this province. So those who would find it wanting might want to look first at their own actions and answer the question, where were they when the call went out?

In conclusion, let me say that this bill will protect the jobs of employees so they can look after their loved ones in their loved ones' most difficult time of need. It will look after the job that must be protected and not force the 40% of them who now must quit their job to give up their job to be with those they love dearest. It will support businesses, in fact, by encouraging a more productive approach to this very difficult challenge that faces employees and employers. It will support those who need the care, because during the time they need them most, they will have their loved ones beside them. It will support the people of Ontario as the McGuinty government works with the people of Ontario to build a more caring and more compassionate society for the benefit of all.

I yield my time.

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): It's a great pleasure to stand here in this place and speak in favour of Bill 56. I want to begin by congratulating the Minister of

Labour for all the hard work that he has done on this, not only in terms of Bill 56 but in terms of what's happening with the whole labour portfolio and labour issues. I think that to understand Bill 56 correctly, you have to put it in a bit of a broader context.

I want to speak of a recent meeting that I attended with the Minister of Labour because I think it provides the context to understand his approach to the whole issue of the labour portfolio and the bill that has come forward. It was in my area—actually, I was joined by my colleague the member from Guelph-Wellington. We had a meeting with a particular union. There were about a hundred people there. The leadership of this union was from across a large region. They were there to welcome the Minister of Labour, who was going to come and speak with them. Although I obviously have worked with unions in the past—I had worked with them during the campaign and after—I must admit that I went to this meeting with a little bit of trepidation. The people there were mainly the leadership of the union, and of course they watch governments very closely. I wasn't 100% sure what their reaction would be. I want to tell members that when I arrived I was quite relieved. I found out I had nothing to fear. I saw a group that was very anxious to hear about the government's plans and also to hear from the minister.

Then the minister arrived. I must say he was a bit of a celebrity. He came in, and people gathered around him. Do you know what? The minister went around informally and shook hands and introduced himself to every one of those union leaders. He talked to them, but more important than talking about his vision, he listened. He listened to their concerns, and he listened to their vision for issues surrounding labour relations.

I have to tell you there was a feeling of warmth in the room, and that feeling of warmth continued when the minister made a keynote address. I wish members of the Legislature had been there to hear his speech, because within his speech was a basic message. That message was that when it comes to these types of issues, we are not a government that believes in taking sides. We are not a government that tries to identify itself as favouring business over labour, as the previous government did, or favouring labour over business, as the NDP did. That's not our style. That's not our policy.

We are a government, and this is a minister, that wants to work for the best interests of everyone. We recognize that both labour and employers have real needs and concerns, and we want to work with both sides. This was the minister's message: to work with both sides to facilitate agreements, and also, as a government, to act as an honest broker when there are disagreements. In short, we see the key to economic prosperity and well-being in this province as true co-operation between labour and government. I'm happy to report that the reaction at this meeting was overwhelming. Every single union leader gave the minister a standing ovation and applauded his vision—not a vision that was big labour or big business, but a vision about co-operation.

This co-operative spirit is what lies behind this bill. Compassionate leave, as the minister so eloquently pointed out, is not simply about workers, it's also about employers. As I think the minister made reference, estimates put the direct cost of absenteeism in the Canadian workplace, due to high work-life conflict, between \$3 billion and \$5 billion per year.

You have to ask yourself, how much attention will someone who's worrying about a dying relative be able to give their job? If someone who is dealing with machinery has a relative at home who is seriously ill, might that employee pose a safety hazard? Employees who take job-protected family medical leave tend to return to their workplaces better able to focus on their jobs. I would argue that employees who have been given the opportunity to take time off and return to their jobs will return with a renewed sense of commitment and with the energy and focus required to perform the work they're assigned.

Up to now, as minister pointed out, many people have had to quit their job to have the time and energy to care for a loved one. This burdens them, and burdens their families, with financial worries and a heightened sense of anxiety. Many—and I'm sure members have encountered them; I know I have—are forced to spend much of or all their savings because they've lost their main source of income.

The measures contained in Bill 56, if passed, will provide a benefit by creating a more positive, loyal and productive workforce. I think the minister made reference in his speech to studies that show roughly 25% of working Canadians experience high levels of caregiver strain. Much of this comes from the difficulties of balancing their work life with the demands of caring for a seriously ill loved one.

Think about the remedy this bill would provide to those sorts of situations. Employees with caregiver strain are not happy employees, they are not good employees, and they shouldn't be there. They should be allowed to have the time off that they need, in this case eight weeks, to care for the relative who's seriously ill.

1600

I just want to spend a few minutes. I've just outlined some of the particulars of the bill. As I mentioned, if passed, the bill would provide up to eight weeks of job-protected unpaid leave for those taking care of seriously ill family members with a significant risk of death within 26 weeks. It applies to all employees covered under the Employment Standards Act, including part-time employees, which I think is very important. It entitles the employee to another eight weeks of job-protected leave if the family member is still gravely ill at the end of the 26-week period. In other words, it recognizes that sometimes these situations can go on past the 26 weeks, and we don't have to play a silly game of watching the calendar.

The benefit goes beyond the employee; it goes beyond the employer. One has to think about—and the minister spoke about it—those who need the care. Studies indicate—and the minister made reference to this—that

80% of Canadians would prefer to spend their last days at home, not in a hospital or an institution, yet, unfortunately, only 25% are able to do that. Part of the reason is, there isn't the availability of family members to give the care to these individuals in the remaining days of their lives. When you think about it, if we can encourage family members to take their responsibilities, not to have the stress of worrying about their job, and they can go and care for a parent or other relative at the same time in their home, this will relieve some of the stress upon our medical system. Certainly every member in this House is aware that our medical system is facing severe strain as our population ages. I think we have to look at home care as being one of the future solutions to the pressures that are put on our medical system, and see how this bill, if passed, will dovetail nicely into these types of strategies, which I think are supported by all members on all sides of the House.

Will there be costs to small business? Obviously, to allow someone to leave for eight weeks will incur some costs, but the government and the minister have thought about ways to mitigate some of these. First, people in a family, I understand, can split up the eight weeks, so a brother and sister caring for a family member could each take four weeks, for example. Second, employees are required to provide notice to their employer so that together they can work out a plan for the employee to leave. Thirdly, in many cases, as I mentioned earlier, the employee simply has to quit. If you want to talk about costs to employers, just ask yourself about a valued employee, someone with years and years of training and experience, who has to up and leave because of an ill parent. Think of the cost to that employer, in terms of losing one of his or her star employees and also having to retrain someone.

We live in a society that recognizes the need for workers to take a leave from time to time. One only has to think of the parental leave, the maternity leave, to know that we put an emphasis on giving people the right to take some time off when their families, their children, are at the beginning of their lives. What this bill does is it recognizes the flip side of the coin. It shows that when people are in their final days, when aging parents or relatives are near the end, people should have the right and the opportunity to care for them. It continues the cycle. It is a very worthwhile policy and, most importantly, to echo the very fine words of the minister, we have to make sure that we never create a situation where an employee has to face the difficult decision of choosing between their job, their career and a sick or dying relative, which is why I want to endorse Bill 56, and I'll be supporting it.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I'm pleased to rise to speak in support of Bill 56, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, in respect of family medical leave and other matters. First all, I'd like to reiterate what this bill will do. If passed, it would provide up to eight weeks of job-protected, unpaid time off work for those taking care of seriously ill family members.

It has been my experience, since I've watched Minister Bentley, that he has been, by many people's account, a remarkable Minister of Labour. He makes some good, balanced decisions because he's well informed and a person of depth who is restoring balance and fairness to our labour laws in this government, something that has been missing for a very long time. The Ministry of Labour had become an entity that was about confrontation. It was an entity that was about breaking down and lessening the rights of people who work in this province.

This legislation reflects the need to adjust the laws to support employees who are dealing with the stressful implications of caring for very ill family members. In our society, with two-job families, the responsibility to care for family members who are seriously ill becomes extremely challenging. The nature of our aging population and increasing workplace demands contribute to very high stress levels in the people who are dealing with the dependant care of someone they love. These dependant care responsibilities constitute major time commitments for many workers. I know many women and men of various ages who run home from work, knowing that there is a parent who is seriously ill but who wants to stay at home. They are juggling their work and they're juggling their time and other family commitments and are stressed out at work because they're thinking about that seriously ill person at home. Yet they have to go to work because they're afraid of losing their job and can't afford not to go into work, or they call in sick once, twice a week. I've heard the stories, because many people have been at wit's end and have asked, "Is there no protection for this case?" for people who have to deal with these situations. Unless you are actually in that situation, sometimes one doesn't understand how much stress is on you as a person and on your whole family.

Work schedules do not include that additional time to provide necessary care and support for seriously ill dependants, and many times a lot of this rests on the women. They tend to be the caregivers at different stages of life. I have to tell you that in my experience the amount of courage it takes to care for someone who is seriously ill and deal with all the emotional stress of dealing with that person versus the fear that they're going to lose their job puts an incredible amount of stress on an individual.

We as a government wish to support those who choose to stay at home for a period of time to care for those who are seriously ill. As well, most people who are ill, given the choice, choose to stay in their homes for as long as possible, hoping that they're going to be supported by the people they love, rather than being institutionalized or being in an institutional environment of a hospital or in long-term care.

In the end, what is more important than caring for our loved ones? That choice is going to be supported by this government, and this legislation will protect the jobs of those family members who choose to be by the side of those who are in their final days, who are seriously ill.

That is, in the end, about a government that is supporting a compassionate heart instead of making life more difficult. Government does play a role in people's lives, and this is one of those roles whereby it is supporting and enhancing, if you want, the protection of people who choose to care for a very ill loved one.

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As the minister has stated, and as others have stated, this legislation dovetails with changes to federal legislation. Therefore, you have the six weeks of unemployment insurance benefits. It eases the financial burden that's caused by people not earning a salary. As has been stated, we have to be mindful of those requirements and the minister has been mindful of the requirements and of the rules of the federal legislation, so we are not going to confuse the mix by adding various changes that do not work in harmony with our federal counterparts.

What is amazing is that this benefit applies to every worker in this province under the Employment Insurance Act. I see some of the opposition members shaking their heads, as if this is some type of legislation that is not relevant. I sat across the aisle and watched the former administration, and I have to say that the former administration, when it came to any of these types of protections, had no interest in dealing with these types of issues. It deteriorated, in my opinion, the quality of life our workers had in this province.

This legislation is a win-win situation because what this legislation does is that it's good for those in need. I'm quoting from Minister Bentley's comments when this legislation was introduced: It's "good for families, good for employees and good for businesses. This legislation is the right thing to do for the people of Ontario."

We have a new era in Ontario, a new era that the people of Ontario chose on October 2, 2003, an era whereby government again has a heart, government again has compassion and government understands the need for quality of life for those who need our help. It's not about survival of the fittest, as had been the case as I watched for four long years when I was sitting in opposition; it was about the minimalist government syndrome and survival of the fittest.

We believe government has to have compassion, has to understand the struggles individuals go through when they have to care for someone who is very ill or dying and they have to hold down a job. Government has to have a way to support that. I applaud this legislation and fully support it and will be thrilled when this legislation is finally passed for third reading.

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's my privilege to stand today and follow the member from Sarnia-Lambton in supporting Bill 56 as it's proposed. I also am pleased to join with my colleague the Minister of Labour, the MPP from London West, Minister Bentley, and my colleague the member for Kitchener Centre.

I'm pleased to take part today in second reading of the proposed Employment Standards Amendment Act (Family Medical Leave), 2004. I'm especially proud of this bill because we've talked as a government, and the

Minister of Labour has talked, about bringing back balance to labour and business in this province. I think a lot of people have thought about that and talked about that in the context of bringing back the balance between business and labour. I think what this particular act is doing is bringing back a balance between work and family, and that's very important. That's something that we need to consider. It's a very basic issue. It's about working together. It's about caring for each other, and it's really a life-and-death issue. It's about the quality of life, and it's about the dignity of dying.

It's a very strong step forward and, if passed, would say a lot about Ontario as a society. It says a lot about how we treat each other when we're going through the tough and the sad times that accompany the death of a loved one. It's an issue, in my opinion, that should rise above politics. It speaks to the values that we share, and one of those values is the relationship we share with our own family members. One thing we all have in common is that some day we will die. We all have to face that eventuality, and as we approach it, we will lose family members along the way. They will pass on.

A lot of the remarks I have heard today, and they've all been wonderful remarks, obviously are being directed at the caregiver who would be the recipient of this legislation. But I also ask you, as we debate this bill, to think about the person whose time to pass has come, to put yourself in that position and to think about that. As you face those final days, would it not be comforting to know that those who are caring for you as you pass through on that journey are also being cared for by members of society? That's exactly what this act does. At a time of great need and great stress, what we're saying as a society is that we will care for you, we will look after you during that period; in exchange, when my time comes, when your time comes, we will look after you.

For anyone taking care of a dying loved one, there is a huge financial and emotional burden that must be borne. Most of us have been through it ourselves, have been through the death of a loved one. It's an unfortunate situation. It's a situation that, however, is eventual for all of us.

Taking care of a seriously ill loved one puts immense strains on anyone who is faced with it. The emotional strain is obvious to all. The financial strain is also significant. Currently, people also need to be concerned about job security and the loss of income during that period. By taking the action that we're proposing today, we can at least eliminate two of those stresses; that is, job security and loss of total income.

According to a recent study of cancer patients, more than 40% of family members of patients surveyed had to quit work to care for their loved ones. That, in the society we have today, is simply not good enough. We can do better than that. This act asks us to do better than that. This act shows us how we can do better than that. Some 25% of those people who were looking after a dying loved one lost most or all of their savings during that period. That simply is cruel. We have the wherewithal

and the ability to put an end to that by supporting this act. About one in four working Canadians experience high levels of caregiver strain, due in no small part to the difficulties of trying to balance their work life with the demands of caring for a seriously ill loved one.

This government does not believe that anyone should be forced to make this impossible choice. But this is really a bill about a contract that Ontarians are prepared to make with each other. What we are saying is that when that sad time comes when you need to be with a loved one as they pass on, we want you thinking about your loved one; we want you caring about your loved one. We don't want you thinking, "I wonder if I still have a job." We don't want you thinking, "I wonder where the rent money is going to come from." We want you doing what we would all wish to do ourselves, and that is to continue to care for that loved one to the best of our ability.

This bill would reduce some of the emotional stress that caregivers face by letting them focus on what's most important: the life of their family member, and not their job at that point in time. Many who take it would be able to access the federal government's compassionate care benefits under the current EI system. This provides up to six weeks of benefits, after a two-week waiting period, to caregivers and helps to ease some of the financial burden.

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Family medical leave would, if passed by this Legislature, give employees caring for a dying family member a window of relief that will help them to focus on what's most important at that point in time. Then after the passing they're able to return to work with less emotional stress, being able to move on with their lives, being able to focus on their jobs, being able to focus on their careers, not having lost most of their savings and not having had to quit their job along the way.

We all talk about it during a time of passing. You hear people at funerals talking about it. You hear people at wakes talking about it. You hear it for a few weeks after the passing, and people say, "Well, it's time to move on." When that time to move on comes, I think people should be equipped to move on. They're dealing with an emotional loss, with the loss of a family member whom they have either raised or who has raised them and has taught them the very basic things we know about ourselves and each other. The very basic things that define us as a society have been passed on through family members. At that time, when you're thinking about that, you want to have the ability to move on with your life, to deal with that. You don't want to have to deal with the financial stress that might accompany that.

The same study that has been talked about also showed that 36% of dying patients had to be admitted to hospital, not because they wanted to be and not even because of medical necessity, but because their family could no longer provide adequate care for them at home because they were worried about losing their job, were worried about loss of income. They couldn't carry a job and the responsibility of caring for a loved one at the same time.

Think of that. Think about the debates that rage about this House and the conversations we have with each other and the campaigns we run. When we talk about health care, we talk about the stress our health care system is under. Think of the relief this could provide to our already stressed health care system if we were able to allow these people who are passing the dignity to die at home with their loved ones.

This government believes people have the right to die with dignity. For many people, this means being able to remain in their home as long as possible with the support of the people they love rather than in the institutional environment of a hospital or a long-term-care facility.

We all know the stresses our health care system is facing. As I noted, it's probably the number one topic around here. Some of those stresses and financial costs result directly from an aging population. Being able to stay at home obviously reduces the strain on an already overburdened health care system.

Providing dying people with the quality of care they deserve is a good enough reason all by itself. When you add to that the positive impact you can have on the health care system, when you add to that the dignity you're able to provide a person at the very toughest time of their life, this bill is a win-win-win situation all around for everybody involved. I'm sure most of my colleagues here agree.

Our doctors and nurses and other health care providers in Ontario provide a standard of care for dying patients that is second to none. They know. They deal with these people on a daily basis. That's their vocation. They will tell you there is nothing they could do as experts that could possibly ever substitute for the care provided by family members. This bill simply allows that care to take place.

If this bill is passed, patients nearing the end of their lives would be able to do so with better support from loved ones. Many may be able to stay in their homes a little longer than they're able to at present. This can make all the difference for someone facing their final days, being able to spend as much time as possible with loved ones, and not in a hospital room but in a familiar environment.

This bill, if passed, would support caregivers and provide the dignity of care that the dying deserve. It would, as well, be a boon to employers. A recent study found that 10% of caregivers reported high absenteeism from work, and not just from dealing with the loved one, the dying person, but from the emotional, physical and the mental fatigue that they themselves suffer. It's that stress that is brought about not just by dealing with the death itself, but also thinking, "Do I still have a job? Am I still going to have a job when this is all over? How am I going to make money? How do I keep the business going?" In fact, employees with high caregiver strain are 13 times more likely to miss three or more days of work in a six-month period and almost twice as likely to miss work because they were simply emotionally, physically or mentally fatigued. When employees in these situations

are at work, their emotional stress is disruptive to their own work and to their co-workers. You know how it is to deal with a person who's going through a loss. Imagine having to do a complicated job with that person. Imagine having to do a dangerous job with that person. Imagine having to do a job where you had to give that work you were doing every ounce of your attention, and knowing that that person's mind is simply not on the job; that person's mind is on the person they love who's sitting in a hospital room, or lying in a hospital room, in an environment that they simply don't want to be in.

Interjection.

Mr Flynn: It certainly is.

When employees in these situations are at work, their emotional stress is disruptive, as I've said. It affects productivity in the workplace and it affects morale in the workplace. So you see, employees also stand to benefit if this bill is passed.

In today's work environment, it is becoming increasingly difficult for many workers to find a good balance between their work life and their personal life. As I said at the start, the object of this bill is to start to restore that balance between work life and personal life. This has a direct impact on the bottom line of a business. The direct costs of absenteeism in Canadian workplaces due to high work-life conflict are estimated at between \$3 billion and \$5 billion per year. Indirect costs are estimated at up to an additional \$5 billion per year. Caregiver strain is a significant contributor to these costs. The direct costs of absenteeism to Canadian business due to high caregiver strain is estimated to be over \$1 billion per year. That's \$1 billion that Canadian businesses are having to spend. This act would simply start to give them the wherewithal to not spend that money, to allow that money to be reinvested in companies. You could also add about another \$2 billion per year in indirect costs associated with that absenteeism.

While family medical leave may have an immediate cost to some employers by having, obviously, to make other arrangements for employees away on this leave and to get the work of the business done, the employer would not have to pay that employee for the period they would be on leave. That's where the employment insurance kicks in. This cost, however, that may be borne by employers by having to make other arrangements would be comparatively minor, and the disruption it would cause is less than what is currently being incurred through employee stress, absenteeism, loss of productivity, and eroded loyalty. An employer that grants this leave, an employer that understands that an employee must take time off at a time like this is, in my opinion, the type of employer that Canadians want to work for.

I believe that Canadian business will support this. I believe that Canadian business is behind this. They understand that keeping employee morale up, that caring for a loved one during a period of strain such as this, is so important to an employee. If they support the employee at that time of loss or that time of potential loss, that employee will be loyal to that company. That employee

will want to work. That employee, in my opinion, will pay back in dividends for the time that they are granted that they currently are not allowed to take. If they are allowed to take it by the passage of this act, I think they will pay back in dividends to Canadian business for the positive support they received from this act and, at that point in time, from the employer.

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Now these costs are considerable. Employees with high caregiver responsibilities are up to six times more likely to experience stress at work, leading to reduced productivity and disruptions to other workers, as well as potential health and safety considerations.

As I've said, they are 13 times more likely to miss three or more days of work in a six-month period. It would seem to me that if that type of absenteeism is known, and we know that employees who are faced with a situation at home like this are going to respond in that manner, it would make more sense to me that the employer would make other arrangements, would want to make other arrangements, would want to assist the employee through that period.

They are twice as likely to miss three or more days' work in a six-month period due to fatigue.

This is interesting, I think: They are more than twice as likely to consider simply quitting their job, taking with them all of the knowledge, training and experience that not only have they earned and learned as employees, but that the employer has invested in. They take all of that with them when they leave. If they decide it's important enough for me to be at home with a loved one, and this act is not passed, it's obvious, and the results are quite clear, that some employees think it's simply important enough, and they walk away from their job.

Absenteeism due to caregiver strain results in direct costs to business, as I said earlier, of over \$1 billion a year, and indirect costs of an additional \$2 billion a year. So we're talking \$3 billion of costs right now that are associated with absenteeism and directly attributable to Canadian business. These costs are huge but avoidable, if we act responsibly as a society and recognize that we need to take care of the people who must take care of a dying family member.

Family medical leave would be the responsible thing to do, in my opinion, and that's why I support this act and urge all members of the House to support it. It would allow for unpaid absences, letting workers deal with a personal crisis on their own time, without disrupting the workplace and affecting productivity. It would allow workers to come back to work when they are better able to focus on their job, with less stress and obviously in better health. It would mean many employees would not be forced to quit their job in order to care for a dying family member. This now causes even greater disruption and cost to employers.

This bill, if passed, would result in fewer days lost in work places, when employees can no longer cope with the strain of meeting their personal and professional obligations. The impact of this is often taken for granted,

but as I said when I was talking about the \$3 billion earlier, its impact on business is significant and simply cannot be ignored. So we see it is not only the employees who would benefit from this bill if it were passed.

Some important issues have been raised by opposition members regarding family medical leave, and there are many ways we can provide support to caregivers. People have talked of tax relief. People have talked of tax cuts. But tax relief is of little use if you've quit your job. Tax relief is of little use if you're left with little or no income.

The minister has put forward an act that is worthy of support of all parties in this House. It speaks to the civility with which we treat each other as a society. I urge and beg your support.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I have just had the pleasure of listening for an hour to three separate speakers speak on this issue, and not one of them has said the reality of this bill. This bill is being presented in this Legislature in the same way that it is being presented in the other nine Legislatures and the other three territorial governments in this country. It is not something that is unique to Ontario. It is not something that is unique to this party. It is something that was done first in Canada, and is now being followed through in each of the provinces and territories in Canada. In fact, places like Quebec have already passed this bill, and others will be debating it, much as we are doing here.

So I don't know. Here we are talking about compassion. Here we are talking about what the bill's going to do. The reality is, this bill is going to pass. It has to pass because you have to jig it all with the federal legislation. I hope all members of the Legislature will understand that this bill—what can I say?—needs to be passed. It should be done rapidly. To listen to a number of speakers say the same thing over and over again I would think would have to be one of the great travesties of this House.

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I'm pleased to rise and speak in support of Bill 56, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, in respect of family medical leave. I'd like to thank the Minister of Labour for introducing this piece of legislation and to agree with my colleagues from Kitchener Centre, Sarnia-Lambton and Oakville, who have spoken very eloquently in support of the bill. I'd also like to thank the member from Beaches-East York.

The member from Beaches-East York is quite right in noting that this legislation dovetails very well with the federal legislation. That is quite deliberate. While the federal legislation allows for EI protection for family medical leave in certain situations, what was lacking was the equivalent legislation at the provincial level to make sure that when somebody takes a leave to take care of a terminally ill family member, they are assured their job is protected.

This is not a trivial issue. What all the data tell us is that with the current situation, many people, when they have to care for a terminally ill family member, are faced

with the difficult choice of being able to provide that palliative care at home, on the one hand, or of quitting their job. Many people in the past have had to quit their job to take up that homecare role at the end of life.

What this piece of legislation does is to protect the job so that the family member who is providing care is assured that they will have a job to come back to. I'm very pleased to support this bill.

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I'm honoured to stand in this building to speak in support of Bill 56. I believe, after listening to the details from the Honourable Minister of Labour, Chris Bentley from London West, that I cannot find myself in greater support for this bill. This bill for the first time ever talks about the balance between employers and employees. It talks about dealing with family issues.

Interjection: It's all a matter of balance.

Mr Ramal: Definitely.

For the first time ever in this House we have introduced a bill to deal with this family issue, to deal with the employee who has, without choice, a medical situation in his house, yet he has to go to work. He cannot go to work because he's thinking about the person he loves, who is living in his house. He's supposed to be looking after them, but he goes to work and cannot perform as he is supposed to.

Also as my friend, my colleague from Oakville who spoke a few minutes ago about the details of this issue said, it will become a safety matter. How can we go to work and work while thinking about our father, mother, sister, son or daughter, living at home and facing some health difficulties. I think this bill makes a balance, for the first time, between work and family situation. I'm honoured to stand today and support it. I hope all members of this House will support it. I was pleased when I heard the member for Beaches-East York speak well about his support of this bill. I hope all the members speak the same way as the member.

1640

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I am pleased to rise and comment on this important bill on family medical leave. I want to first comment in reply to the member for Beaches-East York. Yes, there may be variations of similar protection in other provinces, other jurisdictions, but most certainly we do not have that here in Ontario, and I want to commend the Minister of Labour, Minister Bentley, for bringing this forward.

Not every family currently can enjoy the opportunities that my family did to stay with a loved one who was terminally ill. We were able to do that because of circumstances within our family, those being mainly that we were self-employed and lived in close proximity to the person who was ill: my mother. But others don't have that opportunity, because they are in a workplace and there are competing interests, one of providing for their family and one of providing for someone who is very ill.

This bill will remove the circumstance where one must determine whether they are going to go to their workplace or stay at home. Their job will be protected under

this bill, and they can make the conscious effort to be with a loved one at a time of most need. This protection is one that people can avail themselves of if they so choose. I think it's incumbent upon us as a compassionate society—and Ontario prides itself on its diversity and compassion—to provide this for those who would require it. The bill, interestingly enough, allows for multiple persons to take opportunities in this regard, not simultaneously, but to divide those interests of being with a sick family member.

I leave those comments with you.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? Oh, I'm sorry. Minister, you have two minutes to reply.

Hon Mr Bentley: I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members for Kitchener Centre, Sarnia-Lambton, Oakville, Beaches-East York, Guelph-Wellington, London-Fanshawe and Chatham-Kent Essex for contributing their comments and participating in the debate. The number of speakers who have joined this debate and participated and the tenor and tone of the comments indicate that this is a provision that is needed in Ontario, a provision that the people of Ontario will benefit from and a provision that has its time now.

I'm looking forward to the debate as we proceed. I'm looking forward to hearing further comments and to hearing how this will positively assist and affect Ontario families. I'm looking forward to hearing how this will support employees in making that difficult choice that they make now without the support of job protection. And I'm looking forward to hearing how employers will be positively impacted by this.

I noted the comments of the member for Beaches-East York. I wish it were true that every other province was bringing in a similar piece of legislation. There are a number that have said they will not, but I was very pleased to hear his support.

We will certainly keep our comments to a minimum if we can have all-party support for this piece of legislation. It is important that it be implemented as quickly as possible so that people can take advantage of the federal benefits without concern for losing their jobs.

Thank you very much for the opportunity. I look forward to hearing further from the members of this House as we proceed on this important piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Now we are prepared for further debate.

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'll just say at the outset that I'm going to be sharing my time with the member from Whitby-Ajax.

I am pleased to join the debate on Bill 56. We do believe that this is a good first step for families and individuals who have taken on that very onerous, difficult and challenging responsibility of caring for a loved one who has become ill. Now these individuals do have the chance to remain and care for that individual for a short period of time.

However, I do agree with the member from Beaches-East York, who said that we need to keep in mind that

this provincial law is a complementary piece of legislation to the new federal rules that allow caregivers to claim up to six weeks of employment insurance benefits. So we welcome this legislation, and I know that caregivers and their families in this province welcome it as well. It is necessary, and we will support it.

However, as I've said, and as the member from Beaches-East York has said, this is complementary to the federal legislation, and regrettably it falls well short of the Liberal promise that was made to help Ontarians care for parents and other seriously ill family members, since it fails totally to provide any of these individuals who take on this responsibility with the support and resources that they require. So I want to focus some of my comments on this bill. There are some areas within the bill that I know require clarification, and I also want to share with this House how I believe, and our party believes, the bill can be improved.

First of all, let's take a look at the bill. What the bill is doing is amending the Employment Standards Act, 2000, to entitle employees to up to eight weeks' leave of absence without pay to provide care or support to specified family members. It applies if the family member suffers from a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death occurring within a period of 26 weeks or such shorter period as may be prescribed by regulation.

If we take a look at that legislation, we recognize immediately that there are significant shortcomings. It doesn't go far enough to provide the support and the resources that family members are going to need and even resources that the individual who is critically ill is going to require. So individuals will be allowed to take the time off to support the family member; however, one of the first shortcomings of this legislation is the fact that it applies only in the case of those family members who are critically ill—in other words, an individual who has a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death occurring within a period 26 weeks or such shorter period as may be prescribed.

So what this bill does not do is apply to the other caregivers who may wish to be with their family during times of crisis. This may be cancer, this may be a cardiac problem, it may be an automobile accident, but during these times of crisis, if it's not going to mean that there's a significant risk of death occurring within this period of 26 weeks or shorter, it would not allow those other people to benefit from this legislation.

The other area where this bill falls short is that it doesn't deal with parents who may need to take time to care for their developmentally disabled child or their autistic child. I've heard the members in this House today talk about experiences, such as those envisioned by this bill, that create emotional stress for individuals. I can tell you, caring for developmentally disabled children, autistic children, people who are suffering from cancer, cardiac, serious automobile injuries or others also are stressful emotional situations. This bill does not provide reasons or the legitimacy for these individuals to care for

family members who may be impacted. So the bill falls far short of actually going that distance.

1650

As you probably know, our government put forward tax rebates to assist in the long-term care of some of the individuals I have talked about. This government, despite its promises, has not given us any indication or brought forward any legislation to help these individuals: the parent looking after the child or those who have suffered serious illnesses. So again, this bill falls far short.

The bill doesn't fulfill the promise, the commitment the government made to provide family leave for families and individuals who are going through that difficult period of providing care for loved ones who are ill. This bill only applies in situations where there is a significant risk of death. Furthermore, this bill does not provide these individuals who are going to take the time off with any support or resources that they are going to require during this period. We know that people who look after individuals with disabilities and caregivers have additional costs that add to the anxiety of this situation. That is why it is so important that the government provide the additional support and resources that are going to be needed.

In a recent press release, the Premier spoke about people's health being our most precious resource, and I would certainly agree with him. It doesn't matter how much you have in the way of material goods or money, if you don't have your health, you really don't have anything. It is really important that as we take a look at this piece of legislation and we take a look at what more this government needs to do, I believe they need to take a look at how they can support caregivers. They need to take a look at how they can recognize and understand the needs of the caregivers.

The other thing: If this government is now going to shift responsibility for the sick from the health care system to families—and I would agree that most families would prefer to be able to keep their loved one at home if at all possible. But if that is the case, we cannot assume that this individual is going to provide 24-hour care nor the comprehensive care that is going to be required for this terminally ill patient. The government needs to, and should, in conjunction with this legislation, follow through on its election promise to improve home care and long-term-care resources and services for people in the province of Ontario.

I was dismayed to learn today that not only are they not providing any additional resources to home care and long-term care, but this Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is clawing back from the long-term-care facilities additional money in the form of the property tax rebates, which means that residents are not going to have the services, the food or the programs they need and deserve.

At the end of the day, this government has promised that they're going to invest an additional \$6,000 per patient in a long-term-care facility. I can tell you, with the clawbacks that are now going on, which I understand

are going to be 50%, which is another broken promise, we're going to see a loss per resident in long-term-care facilities. It might be \$1,000, it might be \$2,000, and that's not what they promised. They promised to add \$6,000 and now they're clawing back.

The other day the minister said that they're still getting the same amount of money. Well, yes, they are, but what the minister did not say is that today in the province of Ontario we have more beds, which means more human beings occupying those beds. So that pie is simply being shared by more and more individuals. That's the same minister who was quoted in the newspaper and was pictured in the paper expressing compassion and sympathy for people in long-term-care facilities, and he is now clawing back money, which is going to impact on how many caregivers are going to be available for these individuals in long-term-care facilities, the food allowance, the services and the programs. This government is breaking its promises to the frail and the elderly.

I think it is important to also note that the Ontario tax system already has recognized the reduced ability to pay taxes through several non-refundable tax credits for people with disabilities and individuals caring for disabled or infirm family members. In fact, our budget of 2003 was going to add enhancements; we had proposed enhancements to those credits. I am going to speak to those later.

Now, what are some of the other areas of concern that we have heard about? The question that we are asked is, why is the bill limited to only eight weeks out of 26 weeks if that's the period that's being allowed for unpaid leave? For example, we have been asked what happens if the family member does not pass away within the eight weeks allocated or the further allocation that is permitted. I guess the question that the minister needs to respond to is, how long and how frequently can this leave be taken? If we are trying to relieve the anxiety and concern of the individuals who are caring for their loved one and the concerns of those who are terminally ill, there needs to be some assurance given to that caregiver and to that individual who is ill that there definitely will be access for up to the 26 weeks.

Under the "Entitlement to leave" section, we see that a certificate is required from a health practitioner stating that the individual has a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death. I guess the question I would have for the minister is, how does this apply in the case of individuals who are living in Ontario and who have family living abroad in other countries? It might be Greece; it might be India; it might be China; it might be Japan. I would ask the minister, is there going to be a standard certificate that is required? Because in this case, the certificate would need to come from someone outside the province of Ontario, outside the Dominion of Canada.

Another question we would have is, how do you intend to assist hospitals and health service providers during times when these very essential health service providers, such as nurses and doctors, might request to

take a leave of absence to care for a loved one? How will the replacements be found? How will you fill that service gap? We know that in this province already today we don't have enough nurses and we don't have enough doctors, so that might present a significant challenge. I hope that would be taken into consideration.

I have also heard that employers are seeking clarification around whether the proposed eight weeks can be added on to the existing emergency leave and whether there is a certain amount of time an employee must be employed for this leave to apply.

We know that according to a March 2004 Ipsos-Reid survey that was conducted with the Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario, the conference participants at that event ranked elder care among the 10 top contributors to absenteeism and/or health costs in the workplace. This bill will respond to that issue, and I do believe this bill will be well supported by everyone, whether employees or employers.

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But I also think we need to recognize there are challenges and issues that need to be addressed and clarified. I have tried to bring to the attention of the minister some of those very legitimate concerns that need to be addressed to ensure that the proposed legislation achieves its intended goal without causing undue stress on individuals, perhaps on health care facilities and of course on employers. These are some of the details that obviously need to be resolved and ironed out before this legislation becomes law. If we do so, I think we can relieve some of the anxiety that caregivers may experience during a very difficult time in their lives and in the lives of their families.

I want to talk about what we had proposed. I have indicated that we certainly support this bill and we do believe it's necessary, but on the other hand, we are disappointed that the government didn't follow through on some of its other commitments. In our 2003 budget, we actually had proposed the improved tax support for people with disabilities and for family caregivers, because many individuals with disabilities and their caregivers today must cope with more costs than the general population. Any of us who have friends or neighbours with disabilities recognize that there are these costs. In fact, tomorrow we're going to talk about supporting a bill that asks for insulin pumps to be made available—again, a huge cost for people who live with diabetes.

Ontario's tax system already recognizes the reduced ability of people with disabilities and caregivers to pay taxes through several non-refundable tax credits for people with disabilities and individuals caring for disabled or infirm family members. So we did propose some enhancements to those credits.

First, our budget proposed to increase to \$6,637 the underlying amounts for the disability credit, the caregiver credit, the infirm dependant credit and the disability credit supplement for children with severe disabilities.

Secondly, our budget proposed to expand the caregiver credit and the infirm dependant credit to include

spouses or common-law partners who are dependent by reason of a mental or physical infirmity, and to provide support to more caregivers living apart from dependent relatives.

Thirdly, our budget proposed that both the caregiver credit and the infirm dependant credit be reduced when the dependant's net income reaches \$13,050 and eliminated it at an income level of \$19,687. Currently, the caregiver credit is eliminated when a dependant's income reaches \$16,290, and the infirm dependant credit is reduced to zero for dependants with incomes of \$8,922 or more.

Taken together, these enhancements in our 2003 budget would have provided an estimated \$50 million in additional benefits to about 165,000 Ontario residents. This brings us back to the fact that this government needs to step up to the plate and provide similar support and resources for caregivers. You can give people leave without pay, but as I have tried to point out, that is totally inadequate.

I want to review again what's missing from the bill, acknowledging that this is a good step. It's a companion piece to the federal legislation. Unfortunately, it fails to meet the immediate and long-term-care needs of our population, whether they're young people, disabled children, or whether they are our older population.

Also, the bill neglects to take into account the serious emotional, physical and financial burdens one bears when an individual decides to take care of a gravely ill family member. Where are the resources that will allow family members to care for them? Where is the additional money for home care, long-term care? What is the government's plan of action to assist caregivers in these types of situations where they choose to take time off to help their family? These are questions that need answers, and they need answers now.

Yes, this bill takes us forward and certainly addresses some of the outstanding concerns we know about today. It will help Ontarians deal with stressful, difficult and challenging times. I do support this legislation. I trust we can move forward and pass this legislation but, in doing so, I hope the government, in very short order, perhaps in the next month or two—perhaps we'll see it in the budget. I hope we will see the additional support and resources that are going to be required to support the caregiver who is taking time off work. I also hope they'll move forward and allow individuals with family members who are seriously ill but not necessarily dying, or people who have developmentally disabled children—I hope that some allowance will also be given and some consideration to supporting those individuals as well. Maybe the government simply wants to build on our budget initiatives from 2003 and demonstrate that they also recognize this additional need for support.

We will be supporting this bill. As I said at the outset, it is a good first step.

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): I thank my colleague the member for Kitchener-Waterloo for her remarks with respect to this bill and the shortcomings in

this particular legislation coming from the Ministry of Labour. The member for Kitchener-Waterloo of course served with distinction as Minister of Labour and brought in some of the fundamental reforms that enabled economic growth to take off in the province of Ontario after 1995.

It's trite to say, but also true to say that the best social program is a job, and jobs come from economic growth. It's regrettable that we saw in the province of Ontario last month the drop in jobs; 25,000 fewer jobs for people in the province of Ontario last month compared to this month. I hope the people at the Ministry of Labour are having a look at their job statistics and looking at one of their fundamental concerns, which really should be much more fundamental than any other concern, and that is making sure there are jobs for people who labour in the province of Ontario.

We're proud of our record in government of creating more than one million net new jobs in Ontario over the course of the years of the Conservative government. Those jobs were vitally important for people to be able to support their loved ones and their families in the province.

This bill provides for unpaid leave for eight weeks. I dare say I have had no calls about this bill in Whitby-Ajax. I expect that's so because most employers or small business folks in Ontario already do what this bill provides. That's where most of the jobs are. That's where they are created in the province of Ontario. They're good to their employees and work closely with their employees, and most of the members in this House know that. People are compassionate and recognize that burdens are placed on individuals because of illness of family members, particularly catastrophic illnesses, illnesses leading to early death.

Quite frankly, I'm proud of the people of Ontario in the way they have been able to deal with this. I know the Ministry of Labour feels it's necessary to legislate this kind of good behaviour. I suppose there may have been abuses here and there, no doubt. Given human nature, there are some folks who are abusive, so I suppose that may be remedied by this legislation. It may not be, of course, since there are ways people can find to get around legislation, as we all know, particularly in employment areas.

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In any event, it's a minor bill brought forward by the Minister of Labour copying the federal provisions, but it does give us an opportunity to have a look at what in fact this government has been up to in labour legislation and in other bills. I'm not surprised it's a minor bill. We have been here, and these folks across the way have been the government for six months and we have seen virtually no significant legislation in this place. Indeed, even before the House today, we have very little in the way of legislation.

This was going to be the party of economic growth. This was going to be the education government. Is there an education bill before the House? No. Is there a major

economic bill before the House? No. Is there any forward-looking legislation of any consequence before this place? The answer is no. Six months, 231-plus promises to the people of Ontario. Time for a change: There's going to be major change, they said. So where is it? It's this bill copying a federal bill making a minor labour law amendment. This is the big change the Liberals promised to the people of Ontario. There it is, folks all around the province.

You can look at the legislative calendar and at the bills that have been brought forward. They brought forward one bill that was of some consequence, Bill 8, which has gone back to committee again and which is an attack on volunteers on hospital boards around Ontario. I never heard about that during the election campaign. They never promised to attack volunteers who serve on our hospital boards all around the province, but that's what Bill 8 does. It attacks people on our hospital boards.

Then we have the member for Sarnia-Lambton, who spoke on the bill. She said things about this government having a heart and compassion, and that when she sat in opposition on this side, it was survival of the fittest, and so on. I think the member was here when we did the budget increasing dramatically the funding for children's treatment centres. I think she was here when we did the funding providing places for people in our social service system, adults with severe disabilities whose parents are getting elderly and need that kind of help and are worried about what will happen to their children thereafter. I think the member for Sarnia-Lambton was here for those kinds of initiatives.

This tendency toward self-righteousness on the Liberal benches is also emulated by the Premier, this condescending attitude about government knows best for you and government will decide. The state knows best for you, for your family. In education, for example, the state knows that your children should go to state schools and should not go to other schools unless, of course, for a religious education, you're Roman Catholic, but if you're not, if you're Muslim, Jewish or Christian, then you don't count or get to participate. You will be discriminated against. You are, by this government in Ontario.

The whole thing we hear from this government is that we're going to teach character education, they say, in the schools; there's an Orwellian notion of character. Then they bring in a tax on salads. What do they call it? They call it a fat tax. They make fun of people in Ontario who might be overweight. This is the kind of self-righteous, holier-than-thou attitude that is reflected by this government, including the member who's barracking opposite there, the kind of self-righteous attitude that is being exhibited. But what we actually see is minor legislation with none of the big promises that they made being fulfilled. We do see a lot of promises made, of course, that are being broken.

Think about the labour reforms we did before. Think about the growth in the province of Ontario. Think about the project agreements we did in Sarnia-Lambton. Look at that single labour reform that went through this

Legislature and that has resulted in hundreds of jobs and major projects in Sarnia-Lambton in the petrochemical industry. That would not have happened were it not for that legislation in this place. That's the kind of labour reform we need in Ontario. It makes us more competitive, so that Sarnia-Lambton can compete with Galveston and can compete with Alberta. That's the kind of step forward we need. That's what I hope we see from the Liberal government at some point.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Compete with Alabama; compete with Louisiana.

Mr Flaherty: No, Galveston is in Texas. We have the member from one of the Ottawa ridings who thinks Galveston is in Louisiana. You can check your map book there; you'll see where it is.

But if you knew something, which I guess you don't, about the petrochemical industry, if you know something about good jobs in that industry, if you knew about competition in that industry, if you knew the labour problems they had that we were able to solve—with co-operation, I might add, from the unions and from the employers—it required legislation, which we did. Now these project agreements have happened in that part of Ontario. It's not just important for that part of Ontario; it's a major industry for our province in generating very good jobs.

Labour reforms, the Ontario-Quebec situation, the labour mobility situation—

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): It's not done yet.

Mr Flaherty: The member opposite says it's not done yet, and you're right, but it's better. It's better than it was, because we got their attention. We had to do it through legislation, mind you, and some arduous discussions with our colleagues in Quebec, but the point was raised and we moved forward and we made progress. I'm sure as Canadians we all want to make sure that we have interprovincial opportunities to work that are equal; that's a fundamental. That is something I hope the government and the Minister of Labour pursue. It is an ongoing challenge, given perhaps the different labour structures in the two provinces along the Ottawa River. So there's more to be done there, but we went a long way down that road. That's the kind of labour reform that generates jobs for the people in the province of Ontario.

We brought in another important labour reform about secret ballots.

Interjection.

Mr Flaherty: This bill is OK. The member asked if I liked the bill. There's not much to it, but it's OK. It's not really something to get worked up about. That's why I'm talking about the bigger picture. I know the Liberal members opposite want to hear about the bigger picture, in labour in particular, and what we can do in labour so they have more jobs here.

That secret ballot vote was very important. That kept business in the province of Ontario. I'm sure most people in the province thought that when people were voting at their workplaces about union issues, certification and so on, it was a secret ballot. After all, when we vote in

general elections, and by-elections even, we assume a secret ballot as our democratic right. So that also happened as one of the fundamental labour reforms that we did in Ontario during our time.

The people of Ontario have high expectations of the Liberal government, and I think that's justified. It's justified because the Liberals and Mr McGuinty went to the people of Ontario last year and made several hundred promises to them about the Valhalla that Ontario would be under the government of Mr McGuinty. Many of those promises have been broken. Some of them are fundamental.

The promise to the people of Ontario to hold the line on taxes, which has been broken: That is a breach of trust with the people of Ontario by Mr McGuinty and his party. It is being remembered already, and we are only at the six-month mark for this government.

Another fundamental promise was about a balanced budget. It looks unlikely that on May 18, the people of Ontario are going to hear a balanced budget from the current Minister of Finance. It's virtually impossible for him to deliver a balanced budget, because they've gone on a spending orgy in the province of Ontario, an incredible spending spree in excess of \$3 billion. They say they care about a deficit, and they go spend another \$3 billion.

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What's that all about? Money going out to hospitals—I get phone calls from hospital boards saying, “We didn't even ask for this money now, and it's arriving.” Commissions receiving money; the Minister of Natural Resources running around the province handing out money. All of a sudden there are chunks of money here, chunks of money there. Why? So that the Liberal government can come up with this big number and say this deficit was the fault, of course, of the Conservatives. People are tiring of that. They know what you're doing in the spending area, in excess of \$3 billion. You're not finished yet; it may be more than \$3 billion by the time you're finished.

It's interesting, because if you look at what the Minister of Finance said before the parliamentary committee on finance and economics affairs—this is last December—it looked like the Minister of Finance was planning to balance the budget. This is December 9. He says, “Overall, in one fiscal year, all of these measures together should represent about \$2.9 billion in revenues to the province.” These are the new taxes, the fee increases and all that the Liberal government is doing. So Mr Sorbara says on December 9 in Hansard at committee, “about \$2.9 billion in revenues to the province. If you just apply that to this year, it's about half the \$5.6-billion deficit, so clearly there's a lot more work to do in terms of recasting and reorganizing our expenditures.”

At that point in December, the Minister of Finance was saying, “OK, I'm working this down. I'm going to work down toward a balanced budget.” But then, \$3 billion-plus in new spending, including \$500 million just last week to help out automobile companies in the province of Ontario.

I think what the people expect is candour from the government. In other words, don't tell me one thing and do another thing. Be frank with me. If you're going to go spend the money, say that you're spending in excess of \$3 billion. Admit it to the people of Ontario. Admit that you're going to run a huge deficit. Don't try to be all things to all people now, as you did last year.

They're not fooling the people anyway. The people see this spending, and they know who's going to pay for it. They know that there's only one taxpayer, and they know that their pockets are going to be picked on May 18 by this Liberal government—the government that promised them to hold the line on taxes and deliver a balanced budget. That's what the promises were—those fundamental promises—then. Promises made, promises broken.

Compare that with the legacy that we had of promises made and promises kept. Not everyone in the province of Ontario agreed. I know this is hard to believe, but not everyone agreed with everything Premier Harris or our government did. Not everyone agreed with that. But at least there was respect by the people for the decision-making process of government. Why? Because when we sought their consent at the polls, when they voted for Premier Harris, they knew that the promises that had been made would be kept. What a refreshing difference from what we see today by this government in this place.

There's something else: government living within its means. The people in Whitby and Ajax tell me that they want government to live within its means. They don't have the luxury of borrowing and building up debt. They like the fact that in 2001, when I was the Minister of Finance, we made the largest payment in the history of the province against public debt—\$3 billion—the same amount of money this government has squandered already, despite the fact that they're talking about deficits.

Listen, the people in the province of Ontario—

Interjection.

Mr Flaherty: I know the member for Aldershot and other places doesn't like to hear this, but the people of the province of Ontario want to see the debt reduced, the same way they pay off mortgages on their homes. You know that's a priority with most of the people in the province. Don't you think they expect the same thing from government? Don't you think, when they look at us in this place and look at this government, they say, “Would you please live within your means?”

Now, that requires decision-making. Ah, here's the problem. You have to make decisions when you're the government. What do we hear day after day from the other side of the House? We hear, “Oh, the Conservatives did this, the Conservatives did that.” When are you going to be the government? When are you going to start making the tough choices that have to be made? That's what governing is all about, and no, it's not easy. You have to make tough decisions. You do. It will be good for them, Mr Speaker.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Heckling should be done from your—

Mr Flaherty: I know I've touched a nerve, and the member's not in his seat, in any event. It's an important nerve.

It's not easy being government. It's work. You actually have to look at issues, and you can't just deliver platitudes, a lot of which I heard in the Liberal speeches here today. You actually have to make decisions, and that's why you're elected. You asked to be elected, you asked the people of the province of Ontario to give you a mandate, you got the mandate, and now you've to make some decisions. People expect you to do that, and they expect accurate information.

You look at something like that automobile insurance promise that was made, how the people of the province of Ontario have been misled by a promise that said the premiums would be 10% lower this year than last year.

The Deputy Speaker: Will the member please take his seat for a moment. The member from Sarnia-Lambton.

Ms Di Cocco: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe that we're dealing with An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, in respect to family needs, and I believe that the member really should stay on topic.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point, and I would ask the member to bring his comments back in that direction, please.

Mr Flaherty: Thank you, Speaker. I acknowledge the point being made. Of course, I'm speaking about the relatively minor legislation that has been brought into this House, compared to the major issues that we're facing, and looking for that major reform from the Ministry of Labour. Goodness knows, we need continued labour reforms. We need jobs. We lost 25,000 jobs last month. My goodness, it's shocking.

They've got me surrounded. We're surrounded by Liberals in here. They're over here; there are some over there; there are almost as many Liberal as there were promises. That'll change. They also will be broken by the electorate.

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Repeat that line. That's a good line.

Mr Flaherty: No, I don't like that line.

That important thing is to be accurate to the people of Ontario, and that, of course, is the point, whether it's in this labour bill or any other bill that comes before this House. The auto insurance thing is particularly repugnant on that issue of candour with the people of Ontario. To go to the people of Ontario, as an example, and say, "Your automobile insurance premiums, on average, will be 10% lower this year, 2004, than they were last year, 2003," is inaccurate and leads people to a conclusion that is wrong. It's more than that, because people have to plan—

The Deputy Speaker: I do remind the member to talk a bit about the labour bill.

Mr Flaherty: We're concerned about families with this bill. I am concerned about families being able to pay their automobile insurance premiums when they've planned to pay 10% less, because that's what you told them was going to happen. You're saying in here they can take eight weeks off work. They're going to have to work the eight weeks to pay their automobile insurance premiums.

It's not right to let people think that they're going to have a savings and then for it not to happen. They should write their MPPs. They should send their MPPs renewal notices with their automobile stickers. They could send them to Queen's Park, send them to the Liberals, send them to me, send them to us. All you need is "Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario." The postal code is M7A 1A8. That's a good one to send in, because that's when we'll just test this 10% reduction. I think the test clearly will not be met.

Taxing and spending: very substantial tax increases coming for the people of the province of Ontario. Why? To build up a deficit. Why they want to build up a deficit I don't know, except it's what they did between 1985—

The Deputy Speaker: Member, take your seat. A point of order, the member for Sarnia-Lambton.

Ms Di Cocco: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe that there is a convention in this place that when a bill comes before us, we speak to the bill. I'm sure the member wants to raise the level of debate in here so at least we are talking about the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you to the member. The member for Whitby-Ajax, please.

Mr Flaherty: The member for Sarnia-Lambton got up in debate and said she had a monopoly on compassion. What's that got to do with this bill? She was saying that the people on this side of the House, the Conservatives, were all these hard-hearted people. What's that got to do with it? What is she talking about in this place? That's ridiculous. She thinks she has a monopoly on compassion. Ridiculous.

1730

Taxing: We need our jobs in Ontario. What the Minister of Labour should be concerned about is getting jobs for the people of Ontario, making sure that our legal structure is such that people get to work and that we have economic growth. You don't do that by cash-grabbing \$200 million from people who want to buy soup and a salad at Tim Hortons, but that's what they proposed, a tax grab of \$200 million. You'd think the Minister of Labour—

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I know there are some members of that caucus who are running for leadership who can't tell the difference between Bill 31 and Bill 8—

The Deputy Speaker: Get to the point of order, please.

Mr Wilkinson: —or perhaps the member who is speaking can't tell the difference between auto insurance and compassionate leave.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order, please.

Mr Wilkinson: I hope we could speak to the bill, Mr Speaker. You're the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: I would ask the member for Whitby-Ajax—I don't want to be interrupting all the time, but it would be best if we stuck as closely as we could to the bill at hand.

Mr Flaherty: I can speak to the compassion issue that was raised by the members on the other side as part of the debate. The holier-than-thou member for Sarnia-Lambton feels she has a monopoly on compassion in Ontario and that other people in this province aren't so inclined.

Do you know what's important when you look at a labour bill like this and when you look at the job losses in Ontario? This is the Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review for our province. The Ministry of Labour is an important player in this Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review. We have in Ontario a government that is going to have revenues this year of something like \$70 billion. This government, including the Ministry of Labour, anticipates that they will spend more than that. They also anticipate that they will have additional revenues in each of the subsequent years in excess of \$4 billion, based on the government's own assumptions as set out in these estimates.

We have a government that is going to tell the people of Ontario that their insatiable appetite for taxing the people and the small businesses of Ontario is bigger than \$4 billion a year over the course of the next several years. This should be of grave concern to the experts on jobs at the Ministry of Labour, because it is a danger. If you can't run a government with an additional \$4 billion a year over the course of the next four years, and balance the budget, without taxing more from the maxed-out people of Ontario, then we have a serious balanced-budget challenge in this province.

I encourage those at the Ministry of Labour who bring this bill forward, and the minister, to look at the strong fundamentals we have in this province and try to follow their own advice about restraint, which is on page 8 of the economic review. What's it about? Well, if you look at the budget of Ontario, about \$10 billion is used for interest on the public debt; about 80% of the rest of the money, the operating money, leaving aside capital for a moment, is transferred to transfer partners—school boards, hospitals and so on—and about 70% of that is spent on salaries and benefits.

If the members opposite—if the Minister of Finance and the Premier—are serious about restraint, then they should be talking about it, and they should be preparing the people of Ontario for restraint in their demands and for restraint in spending, including by the Ministry of Labour, which brings forward this bill. It's very important that we develop a culture in Ontario that says that governments will live within their means. The people of Ontario expect that, particularly when they see the large amounts of revenue that are coming into this province over the course of the next several years.

If you look again at the Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review, under the name of the Minister of Finance,

which includes references to the Ministry of Labour and spending and so on, we see that with tax increases, the anticipated increase is about \$4.1 billion annually going forward—staggering amounts of money. One would think that would be sufficient to satisfy the demands of the spenders across the aisle.

After the revenue projections are looked at and after the spending addiction is looked at, we have to look at the decision gridlock. The Ministry of Labour—I give them credit for bringing forward a bill. At least they made a decision. It's a minor bill, but it's a good bill on what it deals with. It's good to see it come forward. But what we know is happening with this government—that's why we don't have more substantive legislation in front of this House—is decision gridlock. They can't decide what to do. Ministry after ministry: important issues. They were going to cap class size in education, they promised the people of Ontario. Where's the bill? They're not doing it. Instead, we get minor bills about this and that and the other thing. That's because they can't make decisions. They're refusing to govern.

Come forward with the important substantive legislation so we can have substantive debate on those important issues you promised the people of Ontario you would deal with. These are important. After six months, we haven't seen any of that substantive legislation promised to the people of Ontario by the Liberals when they were seeking public office. Now they have public office, and they're frozen. They don't know what to do—decision gridlock. That's why we see minor legislation coming forward and being debated in this House.

There are important issues in labour. Job creation is an important issue. It's important to be accurate to the people of Ontario, not only with respect to automobile insurance but also with respect to the cost of the equity in education tax credit. We had inaccurate information given to the people of the province by the ministry.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair is trying to listen for the words "employment standards" and/or "medical," those sorts of things. Really, please speak to the bill.

Mr Flaherty: I am speaking to the bill, Speaker. This member from Sarnia-Lambton comes in here and talks about compassion. You didn't rule her out of order. You didn't tell her to speak to the bill. Now you're telling me I have to speak to the bill. I am—

The Deputy Speaker: Will the member please take his seat. Everybody, just take your seat. I'm merely asking the member for Whitby-Ajax to speak to the bill.

Mr Flaherty: My concern with the bills, of course, Speaker, is that we have job creation in Ontario, and one of the important things about job creation is being frank with the people of the province, so that when you bring in legislation to this place, when you bring in bills, you give them accurate information. Tell them you're out there spending more than \$3 billion of their money to build up a deficit artificially. Tell them that. Tell them that when you brought in the repeal of the equity in education tax credit, you misled them about the amount. Tell

them it was nowhere near \$500 million. Tell them on automobile insurance that you misled them—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. We can keep this going, but let's just have a little bit of order. I want to hear the member to see when the debate is on the bill.

Mr Flaherty: It is important that the promises made to the people of Ontario be kept. It's important that there be integrity in government. The Minister of Finance should have resigned. He is going to present a budget that is going to include the Ministry of Labour and whatever is planned for economic growth and jobs in Ontario going forward. He's planning to do that on May 18. According to the Chair of Management Board, he is going to set the interest rate for Ontario savings bonds despite the fact that his responsibilities for the Ontario Securities Commission and the Toronto Stock Exchange have been taken away. All of this that affects job creation should be of great concern to the Ministry of Labour, although it's clearly not a concern to the member for Sarnia-Lambton, who is compassionately on her feet again.

Ms Di Cocco: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This Legislature has a bill before it that is being developed, that is being debated, and I would expect that the member debate the bill before us.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, the member for Sarnia-Lambton. I think that's fairly well understood. What we're trying to do is to get through this debate. The member for Whitby-Ajax.

1740

Mr Flaherty: The concern, of course, is the insubstantial legislation being brought before this House by the members opposite, including the member for Sarnia-Lambton and including the bill we're debating now. This is insubstantial legislation, not that it's not a good piece of legislation—it's good—but it's just not major legislation. We need major legislation in this House because the Liberal government told us we would have major legislation so that they could keep their promises. Promises made, promises broken is the reality we're facing here, but we hope that legislation will be coming forward.

What we're seeing is responsibility avoidance by this government. We're also seeing a tendency toward bringing in retroactive legislation, with the equity in education tax credit, with trailers, people who use trailers as cottages and recreational properties, and with Bill 49, the Adams mine bill, another bill before this House.

This is a concern. It's against parliamentary tradition to bring in retroactive legislation, particularly when it affects people's pocketbooks. The whole idea is that people are supposed to be able to plan their affairs based on the law as it is now, and that if the law is changed, the law affects their lives going forward proactively and not going backwards. That's been changed by this government in three important areas: the EETC, the trailers and this bill that's before the House, Bill 49.

I encourage the Ministry of Labour to do everything they can to create jobs in Ontario. I encourage the minister to do what he can with the Minister of Finance and the Premier to impress on them that this bill is OK but that there are important steps that need to be taken in this province to ensure we have the kind of job creation we had between 1995 and 2000, and then following 2000 when we got over the one million job mark.

That changed Ontario. It made Ontario a wealthier place to be. It helped families in the province. That job creation and that growth made it possible to increase health care spending by in excess of \$10 billion. I know the Minister of Labour is fully aware that the absolute foundation of the quality of life in this province going forward, whether it's in the labour area, health care, education, social services or protecting the environment, is strong economic growth in Ontario. To do that, we need to encourage the creation of jobs. The Ministry of Labour has an important responsibility there, which I'm sure they are conscious of.

I look forward to the kind of economic initiatives coming forward from the government that will make a bill like this seem not as important, because we'll be looking at the bigger issues: We'll be looking at innovation in the province. We'll be looking at skills training. We'll be looking at balancing budgets. We'll be looking at paying off public debt. We'll be looking at those fundamentals that the Liberal candidates and the now Liberal Premier talked about during the course of the general election only six or seven months ago, but about which we have not seen legislation in this place.

I'd like to hear that they're working on it and that we're going to see this kind of important step forward, but I haven't even heard that. Certainly that's not what we hear when we're allowed to ask questions during question period. What we hear is finger-pointing about what happened with the government before.

I hope the members opposite in the government will rise above that, that they will see to those promises, even the ones they've broken, because it's never too late to repent. What was it that Sean Conway, the member from the Ottawa Valley, used to say? "All saints have a past, all sinners have a future." That's what Sean Conway used to say. That's good counsel to the Liberal government of Ontario that I'm sure your former, long-serving member from the Ottawa Valley would give you. You have an opportunity to make up for those broken promises. You have an opportunity to bring in legislation in this place that will keep your promises to the people of Ontario. That would be a great start as we go forward.

I encourage the minister not only to bring in this bill, which we are supporting as the member for Kitchener-Waterloo indicated, but also to bring in whatever legislation the government decides will help create jobs in the province of Ontario, so we'll have the kind of economic growth that will give us the quality of life, the social services and the brilliant future for the people of Ontario that we all seek.

Thank you, Speaker. I was pleased to speak to the particulars of this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, we've at least reached the point of questions and comments.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): These were important comments. They were wide-ranging but within the context, I put to you, of the interests of the Minister of Labour. It was frustrating, as someone attempting to pay close attention to it, to see the speech interrupted and frustrated by fraudulent points of order, none of which had any merit and none of which ended up being positively ruled on.

Mr David Oraziatti (Sault Ste Marie): You would never do that, Peter.

Mr Kormos: I find it disappointing that a government member would want to utilize the ruse of a point of order to try to occupy the time of a speaker.

Having said that, I take some heart in the concern about the loss of jobs. It was only yesterday that I asked this government about the Bauer Nike jobs in Cambridge and in Mississauga: 300 jobs gone in the Bauer Nike hockey stick factory in Cambridge and Nike, a multinational corporation, not even wanting to contemplate or consider an offer by Canadian investors to purchase that factory, putting those 300 workers back to work, because they don't want the competition from a made-in-Canada hockey manufacturer.

Nike bought out Bauer some years ago—Bauer Nike in Mississauga. Again, Bauer Nike telling its workers—25 of them at that plant, skilled, long-time workers who manufacture the made-to-measure protective equipment for NHL goalies, professional hockey equipment—their jobs are finished. Where's the work going? It's going to China, and it's being contracted out to sweatshop conditions with the likelihood of all of it going offshore.

Now, here's an endemic Canadian industry. These are unique jobs that, quite frankly, will never be restored once they're gone. I sense and appreciate the frustration of the member who spoke. I called upon the government yesterday to intervene. The government shrugs and says, "Oh, well, what can we do?" Well, that's the problem with the Liberals. It's been a matter of, "What can we do?" They've done nothing. They've broken every promise they've made. We've seen what they can do. Now we're seeing what they can't do.

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): I'm delighted to be able to respond to both the member from Whitby-Ajax and the member from Kitchener-Waterloo.

I actually sat here rather incredulously listening to these comments that a bill that permits a caregiver to be with someone at the end of their life is of no significance, insubstantial or minor, the comments that this was a self-righteous and condescending attitude. Can someone please tell me where the good debate is in those words?

We're talking about people—and I speak from personal experience as a palliative care worker for many years—who at the end of their life need to have the person they care for the most with them. They need the support and help of a lot of other people along the way, but in addition, at that critical time in their lives, they

need these people with them, and that is not self-righteous and condescending.

Let me tell you what is self-righteous and condescending. It was the previous government who, if you were dying, ended up in a hospital and didn't die in time, charged you extra for your bed. That's condescending, that's shameful and that's self-righteous.

The fact of the matter is that this bill permits people to be with those they care for the most at the end of their life, be they two months old or 100 years old. It's something that should have been done a long time ago. Thank heaven for the folks who put this together to the minister. It is a good beginning to what we need to do on behalf of many people in this province as we deal with the issue of palliative care. Forty per cent of all seniors in Canada live in this province, and that number will double. I wholeheartedly support this bill.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I'm pleased to join in the debate this afternoon and add some comments to do with the comments made by the member from Kitchener-Waterloo and the member from Whitby-Ajax on Bill 56, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family medical leave and other matters.

As was pointed out by the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, it is complementary to federal legislation, and we do support this bill. It provides eight weeks' leave from work without pay. The member from Kitchener-Waterloo did point out that it does have some shortcomings. In her opinion, it doesn't go far enough and really only deals with those who are critically ill, someone who's expected to pass away within 26 weeks. This is a shortcoming, because there are many other caregivers dealing with illnesses that do not necessarily result in a significant risk of death, but there's still a great need for caregiving. So there are some shortcomings.

1750

One of the worries about a bill like this, if you end up having too many conditions and too much red tape involved with the bill—I know in my riding in the north, we hear a lot about the northern health travel grant and on numerous occasions from individuals, constituents, who are having problems with all the paperwork involved with the northern health travel grant. It really becomes a terrible battle trying to get some compensation from that health travel grant.

I hope this legislation doesn't get bogged down in red tape and goes toward being very supportive of those caregivers who need the support. We do support this legislation.

Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham): I'm happy that the official opposition is supporting Bill 56. I want to address a couple of the comments made by the member for Kitchener-Waterloo and the member for Whitby-Ajax, that this is merely companion legislation in respect of what the federal level is doing. To imply that this is somehow trivial or unimportant is totally inappropriate. I think it is our job as the government of Ontario to work with all other levels of government. We make no apology

for working with the federal government for the betterment of Ontario residents and to improve on the quality of life in this instance.

Let me give you an example as to what would happen if that does not happen. As a former regional councillor in York region, I have seen federal funding in respect of affordable housing coming out on the community rental housing initiative being sat on for more than two years. It's not until we have taken over as the government of Ontario that we have started to make things happen and to build 2,300 units.

I also want address the comment with respect to the certificate requirement when the sick person is overseas. I think it's very clear in the proposed legislation that a qualified health practitioner means a person who is qualified to practise medicine under the laws of the jurisdiction in which care or treatment is provided to the individual described in subsection (1), and so on.

Finally, I want to just quickly talk about the comment of the member for Whitby-Ajax that nobody called him. I think that member is missing the point. We should not have to rely on the good heart of the people of Ontario. It's almost like saying that Canadians are law-abiding and, therefore, we don't need the Criminal Code. I think we need legislation to make sure that people have no fear in their hearts and will be able to get medical leave.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Whitby-Ajax has two minutes to reply.

Mr Flaherty: Thank you, Speaker. I know you want to hear the two minutes on this bill and what the Ministry of Labour can do to encourage job creation in Ontario,

and what the Ministry of Labour could do to enhance the lack of credibility of the Liberal government by encouraging them to start keeping some promises, particularly the fundamental promises about balancing the budget and not increasing taxes. Holding the line on taxes was the magic phrase that was used by Mr McGuinty, now the Premier, when he sought votes from the people of Ontario.

This bill deals with people taking time off work, as much as eight weeks, to take care of a loved one, which is important. There are other ways of addressing the issue. There's the hospice movement in the province of Ontario. In my own area of Durham region that movement has been quite successful, thanks to an incredible group of volunteers. A lot of these folks are seniors—not all, but some—who give of their own selves, give time to operate the hospice in Durham and, of course, to visit people in their homes. My own family has been touched by that, and it is a remarkably sensitive and serving movement in Ontario. I commend that movement and those alternatives to the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Health, whatever, when they're looking at law changes and at funding in Ontario.

At the end of the day, we all want the same thing, and that is that loved ones are best cared for in the final days of their lives. I'm sure that intention is shared by all members of this place and partly addressed by this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1755.

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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of Ontario**

First Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

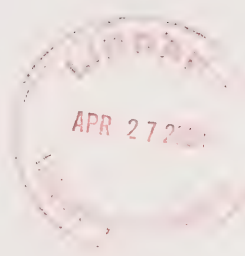
Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 22 April 2004

Jeudi 22 avril 2004



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Honourable Alvin Curling

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 22 April 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 22 avril 2004

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (INSULIN PUMPS FOR DIABETICS), 2004 LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ (POMPES À INSULINE POUR DIABÉTIQUES)

Mr Gravelle moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act /
Projet de loi 55, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-
santé.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Pursuant
to standing order 96, Mr Gravelle, you have 10 minutes.

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior
North):** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Bill 55 is a
very straightforward, simple and quite short one-page
piece of legislation. However, if this bill is supported by
my colleagues today and subsequently receives the sup-
port of our government, the impact its passage will have
on the lives of thousands of people with diabetes will be
nothing short of dramatic.

While I have for some time now been aware of the
lobbying efforts of the Canadian Diabetes Association
and of several of my colleagues to have the provision of
insulin pumps and supplies for the pumps made an in-
sured service under the Health Insurance Act, it is only
since the introduction of my bill two weeks ago that I
have become fully aware of the phenomenal difference
the pump can make to the quality of life for people with
diabetes.

Hundreds of people have phoned or written to me
describing what their lives or the lives of their children
were like before they went on insulin pump therapy and
how their health has dramatically improved since the
pump became a regular part of their lives. For that out-
pouring of support, I am grateful to the Canadian
Diabetes Association for getting the word out about my
bill and encouraging people all across the province to
tell their story.

In particular, I want to acknowledge and thank
Suzanne Sterling, regional director for the association in

northwestern Ontario, and Alexis Mantell, head of com-
munications and media relations for the association in
Toronto, who have joined us in the gallery today. They
are also accompanied by 16-year-old Keiran Quan, who
has been on the pump for only a few weeks now and has
already noticed important improvements in the manage-
ment of his diabetes. Let's welcome Keiran as well. He
has noticed important improvements in the management
of his diabetes and glucose readings in the morning that
are now regularly within the target range set out by the
association's clinical guideline, something he never saw
before. The good news about that is what makes the in-
sulin pump so valuable. Keeping your glucose readings
in control is what helps prevent the long-term complica-
tions of diabetes. Not only do you have an improved
quality of life, but your need to access the health care
system is dramatically reduced.

The value of avoiding these long-term complications
cannot be overstated. While people with diabetes make
up only 6% of Ontario's population, they account for
32% of heart attacks, 43% of heart failure cases, 30% of
strokes, 51% of new dialysis patients and 70% of am-
putations. As a result of these complications, there is the
startling fact that only 50% of people with type 1
diabetes will live to the age of 50, and only 2% live past
the age of 65. The exciting news about the insulin pump
is that if it was available to all those who could benefit
from it, these cruel statistics could change.

Having said that, the insulin pump and the supplies
associated with its use are, relatively speaking, quite
expensive. The pump costs about \$6,000, and the sup-
plies needed can cost between \$3,000 and \$4,000 a year.
As a result, only families with private health insurance or
those who are somehow able to make major financial
sacrifices are able to access the pump. This legislation
today, if it is supported by my colleagues and sub-
sequently supported by our government, can eliminate
that restrictive access to the pump.

Let me say at this point that I am grateful to the
Minister of Health, the Honourable George Smitherman,
for not discouraging me from bringing this legislation
forward. Although there cannot be a provincial ministry
with more financial pressures constantly thrust upon it by
a variety of worthy causes than the Ministry of Health, I
have been encouraged by the minister's clear under-
standing of the value of insulin pump therapy.

With regard to the up-front cost implications of this
legislation, they are not insignificant, but I think we
should bring them forward. I want to refer to a well-

researched document prepared by Jill Milliken, a tireless advocate who I believe may be with us today, and Ian Bulmer, which is a proposal for funding of insulin pump therapy under the assistive devices program. It not only shows the short- and long-term cost savings of insulin pump therapy but also realistically pegs the yearly cost of the provision of this insured service at less than \$20 million a year.

It's also worth noting that not everyone who could access the pump would do so. In jurisdictions where access to the pump has been publicly funded, the rate of usage, for a variety of reasons, has not been more than 20%. I want to share this particular document with the minister, and if my bill receives passage today and I am able to bring it forward before the standing committee on justice and social policy for more discussion, I hope we can look at this proposal in more detail.

While it is important for us to acknowledge the costs associated with the provision of the insulin pump as an insured service, it is virtually impossible to not return to and re-emphasize the significance the pump has on the quality of life for people with diabetes. And while we have focused on the value it has on people who encounter diabetes at a young age, it is important to point out that insulin pump therapy can also stop or reverse complications in adults who have lived with the disease for many, many years.

Today we have in the gallery Mr Paul Beckwith, a constituent of my colleague from Simcoe North, who went on the insulin pump just six years ago. Diagnosed with diabetes in 1966 at the age of 13, Mr Beckwith spent 30 years struggling to manage his condition, with decidedly mixed results. At the time he was able to finally access the insulin pump, he was in grave danger of having his foot amputated and he was not able to work regularly. The situation did not look good. However, once he began insulin pump therapy, his quality of life improved dramatically. The amputation was averted and his health has been such that he tells me he has not missed a day of work since that time. It's a nice story, isn't it? As a result of this, Paul has become a fierce advocate for insulin pump therapy, and may I also say, a pretty good advertisement for potential cost savings to the health care system.

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But even with Mr Beckwith's remarkable and instructive story, there is still nothing more heartening than learning of a young life that has been altered, if not saved, as a result of the insulin pump. We know Keiran's story. He's starting it today.

Many of the most touching letters I received over the past few weeks came from parents of young children with diabetes who either couldn't afford the pump or who were keen to tell me what a difference the pump had made to their child's life, and even more impressive were the letters sent to me from the young people themselves who are now on the pump.

I will conclude my remarks at this time by quoting from a letter sent to me by a young constituent of mine,

16-year-old Derek Lawrence, who went on insulin pump therapy two years ago. I met with Derek recently and saw just how the pump worked. It is quite remarkable and surprisingly unintrusive. Derek's life, like so many others, has improved dramatically since he went on the pump. He tells me in his letter how his life has changed since his life on the pump began:

"Since then, my life has felt almost normal. I'm able to go out with my friends without any planning. I can sleep in on the weekends and even miss a meal if I have to. The pump has, most importantly, kept my blood sugar readings in the targeted range, with very few lows or highs. Because of this I am feeling well and no longer miss out on many things I was unable to do before. The pump has also enabled me to play high school sports. I play on the senior basketball team without any problems. I just adjust the rate of insulin prior to the game, and for several hours after.

"I feel that the pump has given me my life back and given me the confidence to lead a much more normal life"—just remarkable. "It has given me the chance to live a much healthier and longer life, keeping all the complications that come with diabetes at bay. I know that I am very fortunate as my parents have been able to make the pump available to me, but not all families can afford to do this due to the costs. I hope that changes can be made to the government health plan, to enable all people with diabetes access to the pump."

What more can I say? I have many other letters I could read, and perhaps I'll have an opportunity at the closing to do so. But that, I think, tells a story like no other: a young man whose life has been changed.

As a result, I will conclude my remarks by simply asking all members of this House to support this bill so that people like Derek and Keiran can have their lives back as well.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm really pleased to be here today with my colleagues. Our caucus of course will be in full support of Bill 55. We appreciate the fact that you've brought this forward so early in this Parliament. With this kind of timing, surely we can get the bill passed in this term to be covered under the Health Insurance Act of Ontario.

I want to apologize, first of all that our former Minister of Health, Elizabeth Witmer, couldn't be here today. She sends her regrets. She had another important function. But she's in full support of this bill. It came up when she was the minister and it's slowly working its way through the system.

To Mr Gravelle: I want thank you for being persistent in this matter in doing that. I also want to welcome Paul Beckwith. Although Paul missed some time at work in his early time with diabetes, I'll tell you that he is a persistent human being. Paul has been at my office a number of times. I'll be sitting at a spring diabetes forum with him tomorrow with the Canadian Diabetes Association. It's a very important proposal.

I would like to read a letter into the record that I think Mr Gravelle received, just a couple of comments from the insulin pumpers.

"Insulin Pumpers Canada is a volunteer not-for-profit corporation made up of hundreds of people who have had their lifestyle, physical and emotional health or their children's profoundly and positively changed by insulin pump therapy. We have over 400 members in Canada and about 200 in Ontario by way of affiliate groups in Barrie, Hamilton and Belleville. Insulin Pumpers Canada is not affiliated with any insulin pump firm or other diabetes management equipment firm." It's just people who are supportive of the plan.

I'd like to read another couple of quotes from their letter:

"Insulin Pumpers Canada internal estimates indicate that the passage of Bill 55 will save the Ontario health care system a net minimum of tens of millions of dollars per year! This is only accounting for costs of three complications. There are over 30 recognized complications requiring clinical treatment.

"We feel that once the reduction in incidence of all complications is realized, the net health care savings to the province will be over a billion dollars per year." And that's just a phenomenal amount. "Some gross savings to the province may be recognized immediately and probably fully recognized within 20 years or less....

"We believe insulin pump therapy to be a therapy of necessity, not 'choice.' We believe the health and economic arguments for the passage of Bill 55 are irrefutable. This bill will save lives, with the side effect being significantly reduced long-term health costs for Ontario."

That's signed by Darrin Parker, the co-chair of Insulin Pumps Canada, which is situated in Orillia, in my riding.

With that, I just want to say to the members of the House that, this being National Volunteer Week, we realize that many of the people in the audience today are volunteering their time for this very, very important proposal. Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence—and I don't want the Sergeant at Arms to take this away—I want to just show you what an insulin pump is. It looks like a cell phone and it's worth about \$6,000. It's a spare one that Paul had with him today. That's what these citizens are requesting be covered under the act. I hope we can all get together, work with the Minister of Health and the government, and somehow find the funding to cover this, hopefully in this budget, or in a future budget, so that many more people like Paul can have their lives restored and work. I understand he hasn't had a day off work since having the pump.

These types of things are so important to our economy, to our health care system and to the quality of people's lives. With that, I thank you for the time this morning. Again, we will be supporting this bill, and hopefully we can see it right through to final passage.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): First of all, I want to say on behalf of the New Democratic caucus of Ontario that we will be supporting this bill. We think it's a good bill, and I think it's a demonstration of what can be done when members individually, as Mr Gravelle has done, find an issue in their constituency or somewhere in the province and work with stakeholder groups in order to try to find solutions. Obviously, this is a long-standing

issue. I know in all of our constituencies we have the same situation, where there are other services that are uninsured, and this is an attempt to insure such a service.

For the record, I just want to have a little discussion about the way this bill is written, because I thought it was rather neat. When I saw it last week, I looked at it and said, "This is a money bill. This is rather unfortunate," because it could have been ruled out of order. But as I understand it, that's because it's really going to be up to the regulations to decide if the amount of money is going to be attributed to paying for the pumps. That's really where the rubber meets the road. As I understand it, the legislation calls it an insured service, saying insulin pumps will be put under as an insured service but, at the end of the day, it will be up to the cabinet to decide if it is an insured service. At this point it is zero if we pass this legislation. Even if we passed the legislation today and we were to get third reading and royal assent tomorrow morning, it would not change anything. What we really need—and I imagine you've been talking to your colleagues in cabinet—is to have cabinet move to change the regulations to determine to what degree it becomes an insured service. I just want people to know that this is a good step and a good start in the battle, but we need to go to the next step.

I am more than prepared to support this legislation, as my colleagues are. We see this as a good thing, but we really want to know that at the end of the day there is some commitment on behalf of the government to actually insure the service. It's good enough to say, "Yes, this is an insured service," but without the change to the regulations, nothing will happen. So I'd like to hear the member, at the end when he has his opportunity to comment for two minutes, let us know what he intends or thinks is going to happen with regard to the conversations he's had with the Minister of Health, and if they are prepared to insure, are we talking about 20%, 50% or 100% of the cost? That's the other thing we need to know. That will not be conditional on my support. We're going to support this anyway because we think it's a good thing, but I just wanted to put that on the record.

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I want to take this opportunity, however, to talk about diabetes in northern Ontario. As the member from northern Ontario knows, there's a huge amount of diabetes in northern Ontario, and there's a whole bunch of reasons for that, specifically in First Nations communities.

If you look at the communities in Kenora-Rainy River and Timmins-James Bay—I imagine it would be the same in Mr Brown's riding and your riding, Mr Gravelle, where you have First Nations communities—the level of diabetes has really been on the increase over the last number of years. There's a whole bunch of reasons for that as well. The thing that has been very disappointing to me is the way the federal government has been responding to what is a crisis in those communities when it comes to health care, diabetes being just part of it.

I want to give the former government some credit here. We had been working very hard at the Weenee-

bayko hospital in Moose Factory, that services the James Bay, to put in place a dialysis unit. The former Minister of Health had announced, I believe it was about this time last year, that they could go forward and do the planning in order to get insured dialysis services at the hospital.

Recently, the Minister of Health, in conversations I had with him, had actually come forward with the funding. So the Tories started the process, said yes to the whole process, "Go ahead and buy the capital side, build your retrofit that you have to have to the hospitals. Go out and fundraise and get your dialysis units." The last piece that needed to be put in place was the funding, and I'm very glad to note that the Minister of Health, Mr Smitherman, has come forward and are actually funded the three dialysis units in Moose Factory, which is going to go a long way to helping those citizens.

Applause.

Mr Bisson: You can applaud your minister. It's okay, it's allowed.

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): It's good news.

Mr Bisson: Yes, every now and then. I'm a firm believer that our job in opposition is to hold the government accountable. If they do something right, there's nothing wrong in saying they'd done something right. In this case they did. All the credit to the government on that one.

The only other thing I want to say with regard to a couple of things around health services on the James Bay—some of you in this Legislature have had the opportunity—not many—to travel to northern communities, and I really encourage all of you. This is an invitation I'm putting out: Anybody who wants to come into the riding of Timmins-James Bay and travel to the aboriginal communities on the James Bay coast, you will be my guests. Every time I bring somebody into one of those communities, people are absolutely surprised at the conditions that people have to live in on the James Bay coast, as it is in other places across northern Ontario when it comes to isolated reserves.

To the federal government, I've got to say this: We have nothing to be proud of as Canadians in the way we've treated our First Nations people. It is really abysmal. They are having to deal with very little when it comes to resources, health services, housing, water, sewer systems, roads, transportation, you name it. It is really in bad shape.

I was having supper last night with a good friend of mine, Norm Wesley from the Weeneebayko hospital. We're having a bit of a chat about that whole thing. My comment has always been we are extremely lucky that the Mushkegowuk Cree are a very patient people, because most people having to live in that circumstance would be up in arms. Quite frankly, the situation is desperate.

If you look at communities like Attawapiskat, you've got 15 and 20 people living in one house. How does a young child trying to study in school find themselves in a position to be able to study when you've got another 15

or 20 people in the household and the house is inadequate? You have dirt on the roads because there's no pavement. You are having to live with the mud and the dirt and the dust, outside of winter. You've got very little when it comes to health services.

I know that James Bay General does a phenomenal job with the resources they have as a provincial institution in providing acute care services and some long-term-care services in the hospital in Attawapiskat, but they need far more support to be able to do the things that need to be done. There's an initiative in place right now between the Weeneebayko hospital, which is a federal hospital, and James Bay General in the communities, to merge those institutions together, so that we can move to one unified health system on the James Bay coast. I know that most people in the James Bay support that.

I will be coming back to this Legislature, probably in the fall, with a private bill to set up the structure to be able to have a unified hospital board and hospital system on the James Bay coast. I'll be looking for the support of all members in this House when it comes to the bill.

I just want to say, with the few minutes I've got left, there's a lot of work that has got to be done on the James Bay coast. My point is this: We can't wait for the feds no more. The federal government, for 130 years, has abandoned First Nations people. It is without question, that's been the history of our nation.

I think we as a province have to decide, are First Nations people citizens of this province, yes or no?—I say yes—and if they are citizens, we owe them the responsibility of making sure we treat them no differently from the way we treat somebody living in London, Hamilton, Timmins or Thunder Bay. They're entitled to health services. They're entitled to education. They're entitled to family, child and youth services. They're entitled to infrastructure, as any other community should be in Ontario.

One of the things I'm hoping this Legislature will deal with is how we move to that step. It's going to be a difficult process because it means that a mindset has to change in First Nations, because they see the crown as the one that has the fiduciary responsibility, not the province.

So we need to do a bit of educating the communities and say, "You might be better off working with us than with the feds," and then making sure, if we negotiate issues with the feds, such as the transfer of the Weeneebayko hospital over to the province, that the feds don't walk away with the \$4.5 million they're now putting into the budget at Weeneebayko hospital and say, "We're out. No more money." They do have a responsibility. We should use their \$4.5 million, along with what we have, and supplement to make sure that all citizens on James Bay can participate in a health system that is basically as complete as that in any other community.

If you're living in Peawanuck or Attawapiskat and you're a senior who needs long-term-care services, more times than not you've got to go to Timmins. How do you separate families by hundreds of miles, where there are

no roads, because there are no long-term-care services? Many of the health services are just like that. When it comes to diabetes, at least we now can go to Moose Factory, which is a great step forward. But how do we do satellite systems in places like Attawapiskat and others? I believe we can do that in a unified hospital system on the James Bay coast. I'm looking forward to the work they're doing now, and that we're going to continue doing over the spring, summer and fall, moving toward that step of trying to get to an integrated system, but then bringing the province to the table in order to take over health services so we can augment the services that we have now. Thank you.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): It's a pleasure to speak to this bill. I first of all want to thank Mr Gravelle for putting it forward. It's a great bill and it's in character for Mr Gravelle. It's a very caring bill.

It isn't many blocks from here that insulin was discovered. This bill gives us a wonderful opportunity to take one more step in the treatment of diabetes. Diabetes is a kind of insidious disease that we have no cure for, and the treatments that we take now with needles are relatively crude. The body is given shots of insulin, so there are spikes in the treatment. The insulin pumps present us with the opportunity to mimic the body and give regular impulses of insulin into it.

The bill is asking for funding for treatment that's preventive, and it's always difficult to justify preventive treatments when governments are struggling financially. But I would suggest that the investment in these pumps will save the government considerable amounts of money over future years. If we think about the side effects of diabetes, heart attacks, I understand, cost our health care system about \$100,000 the minute a citizen enters a hospital. Pumps at \$5,000 or \$6,000 start to look pretty attractive just from the financial viewpoint. But there's much more to this than the financial viewpoint. If the concern is money and we can prevent a heart attack, then that pump has paid for itself.

Kidney problems, the cost of dialysis clinics: Again, just strictly in dollars, the dialysis clinic costs are more than offset by the cost of these pumps. I would even suggest, if we fund these pumps, that the cost of them will actually go down due to the quantity involved and cost savings.

The leading cause of amputations in our province: diabetes. Loss of vision—and when I say loss of vision, I'm also talking about loss of independence, and if we talk about dialysis, we're talking about loss of independence. The costs of the loss of vision to society are substantial. So the initial money that can go into these pumps I believe is more than offset by future savings to the health care system.

Let's set aside the costs and look at the quality of life for people with pumps. You know it's difficult being a kid, period, but being a kid and having the freedom a kid enjoys are part of growing up and maturing. Having to do a treatment with needles limits the enjoyment and quality of life for a child—not that these pumps are just for

children. But thinking of a child, an amazing amount of freedom comes with this. These pumps are programmed to give different amounts during the day and night and for special activities. The amount of freedom the young person will get access to by having one of these pumps alone would justify the cost.

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Our government is committed to not having two-tier medicine in Ontario, but the reality is, when it comes to insulin pumps, we have two-tier medicine. There are families in this province that have the benefit of perhaps their own personal assets or, in most cases, insurance companies that will fund the cost of the pump. Without exception—and I've also received the e-mails that Mr Gravelle has and I've met with some of the children who have had access to the pumps—it's hard to describe without getting emotional about the quality-of-life change they have experienced once they have this pump.

But for others there simply is no access to the funding. You can have two kids in the same school, one with the pump and one without, and I would suggest that, indirectly and unintentionally, we have two-tier medicine when that exists. We truly need to level the playing field and provide the opportunity for everyone in Ontario to have the greatest quality of life and to have a greater assurance that they're not going to face health problems in their future years.

If you don't have your health, you don't have anything. Everything else becomes irrelevant. We've seen over the last few years that the tax cuts by the previous government have cost us some health care services, and this is an opportunity for us to strengthen the system back and protect our citizens. It just doesn't make much sense not to do it.

I understand the financial challenge facing the province; I know what we inherited. But I believe we have people in this province who are very knowledgeable and committed to this program with whom we can enter into dialogue and find a way to implement it. Maybe we can't do everything the first year, maybe we can't solve the problem in the next month, but we need to start down the road with a plan that will allow us to implement it, identifying priorities, looking for additional resources and looking for priorities as the weeks and months go by.

We have a very real opportunity here to truly make something better, and I'm thrilled, first of all, that the opposition parties are supporting this. But I believe every one of us came to this Legislature to do the right thing and make things better for Ontario, so it is in character that every one of us will support it. I applaud the other parties for their support, I applaud Mr Gravelle, and to all the members, we have a unique opportunity to make a difference today for the people of Ontario.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I've been speaking to the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North and I just want to indicate that I'm supporting his bill, the Health Insurance Amendment Act (Insulin Pumps for Diabetics), 2004. I just want to put that on the record.

The Deputy Speaker: That's an interesting point. Thank you.

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): It's with a great deal of pleasure that I rise today to speak in favour of the passage of Bill 55, a private member's bill put forward by the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North. Bill 55 calls for the amending of the Health Insurance Act, which would allow the inclusion of insulin pumps and supplies for the pumps to become insured services.

I would like to take a few minutes today to relate to you my reasons for supporting this bill. On January 30 of this year I had the pleasure of meeting with Mrs Brown, a constituent of mine whose children have diabetes. The Brown family, like many families in my riding, is finding the costs associated with the care of their children's medical problems related to diabetes increasingly difficult to bear. In fact, she has had to quit work in order to look after her five-year-old daughter, who is a brittle diabetic, and she has had to buy a car in order to travel to the nearest children's diabetic clinic, which is located in Peterborough. We would like to see a satellite children's diabetes clinic located in Lindsay.

Although she spoke to me about a number of concerns with regard to this issue of the treatment of their children, the increasingly expensive costs of health care and the difficulties of travelling, the biggest request was for recognition that the insulin pump and supplies should be covered under the Health Insurance Act. As a result, I wrote to Minister Smitherman on February 11 and related to him the problems of my constituents and the needs of the Canadian Diabetes Association. I'm happy to see that the member from Thunder Bay-Superior North has brought this forward.

I've also spoken to and received e-mails from Ron and Cathy Millen, whose son is a diabetic and uses the insulin pump. The pump has allowed him to meet his demanding university schedule and has eliminated his chronic high and low blood glucose levels. They're paying many thousands of dollars a year to assist their son's medical needs and are hoping that Bill 55 is passed.

As well, George and Dott Heath, who are both diabetics and do volunteer work for the Canadian Diabetes Association, have e-mailed me. They are hoping that Bill 55 receives support and passes.

As a registered nurse in the province of Ontario for over 20 years, I can relate first-hand to these important statistics that show the rise in the percentage of population over 20 years of age with diabetes and our growing seniors population with diabetes. I've had many friends in high school that benefited from the pumps to control their insulin levels.

For many Ontarians, coverage under the Health Insurance Act would mean healthier and more productive lives. It would mean lower costs in the long run to the health care system because, as we've all heard for decades now, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. This will result in a reduction in heart and kidney disease, amputations and blindness. This will save money

in the health care system that will far outweigh the cost that will need to be covered by the amendment to this act. Over 850,000 Ontarians suffer with this diabetes. This bill will directly help thousands of them.

My involvement in politics dates back many years, helping my father, Bill Scott, who served as the MP for Victoria-Haliburton for over 20 years. I learned that much of what we do is partisan, but sometimes it's important to put aside those differences and support what is good for Ontarians. Support for Bill 55 is one of those occasions. I am proud to respond to the needs of my constituents, the needs of other Ontarians and the people in my riding—Mrs Brown, Ron and Cathy Millen, George and Dott Heath—and applaud the many people present today who belong to the Canadian Diabetes Association for pushing forward this initiative. All of us in this Legislature should support this legislation. I am proud and happy to add my support to your bill.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I'm pleased to rise in my place in support of my colleague the wonderful member from Thunder Bay-Superior North, who, like I hope every other member of this House, understands, gets that link between the head and the heart that we talked about a couple weeks ago.

I'm pleased that he, along with a number of people here, has been tirelessly working away at the need for a collaborative, comprehensive diabetes strategy along with the Canadian Diabetes Association and people like Dr Peter Clarke, who, with his working group, the Ontario diabetes guidelines implementation issues working group, has a goal of trying to close the gap between the guidelines and the care that currently exists in Ontario, and they note "including insulin pumps."

I have maybe a bit of a conflict here. I'm a diabetic. I know first hand the blessings of science and technology and the impact that having access to that can have on one's life. But in a few minutes I want to talk a little bit more about somebody else I know.

I want to begin by talking about juvenile diabetes, which usually strikes children and young adults. While there's no cure, there's hope. I understand there are an estimated 60,000 people in this province who struggle with type 1 diabetes. They're dependent on daily insulin injections and numerous blood tests every single day, simply to live. The science is available to assist here. These insulin pumps, which deliver insulin in a very specific way, much more precisely and safely than everyday numerous injections, in fact allow users to participate more normally and more safely in daily activities.

1040

As I said, and the members opposite may want to know, it does hit close to many of us. Bernadette, one of the staff people in my office, who's in the west gallery with us—hi, Bernie. Her young son Shawn has been coping with type 1 diabetes since he was two. And I can tell you—because Bernadette probably wouldn't—that before the insulin pump arrived, life could be hell: visits to the school, emergency calls. Ten-year-old boys don't always take as good care of themselves as 55-year-old

men who understand they've got a problem. Bernadette describes the insulin pump as a godsend. Not only does it allow 12-year-old Shawn to have greater control over his medical condition, for which both his doctors and his family are eternally grateful, but it also allows him some normality in life. He's able to engage in life free of the burden of his disease, at least relatively.

Shawn's a brilliant young defenceman. He's got a poster of Bobby Clarke up in his room. Bobby Clarke, now the general manager of the Philadelphia Flyers, by the way, has fashioned his team along the same lines that he used to play: tenacious.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): He's dirty.

Mr McMeekin: He may be dirty too, but he won several Stanley Cups.

Hon Mr Smitherman: Are you a Philadelphia sympathizer?

Mr McMeekin: No. I'm hoping that although the team has been fashioned in his image, the Maple Leafs don't experience that over the next week or so.

Anyhow, young Shawn is really an inspiration to all of us, and the insulin pump has really helped him to do that. His parents, fortunately, were in a position where they were able to scrape together, by saving some bucks, the \$6,000 that was needed. But do you know what? As the earnest member from down east, Prince Edward-Hastings, said, not everybody can afford that. It really is a model of inappropriate two-tier health care, so thank you for that observation.

You have to see Shawn to appreciate this. I've seen this little guy, this all-star defenceman, who has just been part of winning two championships, by the way, and his dull, sullen, tired eyes magically transformed into that rapsallion sparkle just because of this wonderful device. It's tragic to see those dull, sullen, tired eyes and to know that there are kids and others out there who don't get a chance to be transformed and have the quality of life they want. Shawn can go to birthday parties now. He can go to sleepovers at a friend's home. He can do a lot of things that he couldn't do before.

Just moving way ahead here to the end—there are lots of great quotes but I won't go into those, but just to say, why we are here in this place? We're here on a good day to give expression to common sense and to the public good, to indicate that on a good day, science ought to be in the service of humanity, not the other way around. What the hell good is having research and all the discoveries we make if people don't have access to them? I would say on the cost side, where else but here can you get a 30-to-1 value-for-dollar comparison? On the cost side, there may be some giant obstacles, but as the member for Thunder Bay has so appropriately noted, what the heck are giant obstacles except brilliant opportunities cleverly in disguise?

I stand with your other colleagues in the House, Michael, to applaud you for your initiative and to express my thanks personally, professionally and on behalf of all the children and people in the province of Ontario.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure indeed to stand this morning and thank the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North, first, for taking the time to listen and, second, for drafting a bill that supports people who are obviously in need of government to take action and be supportive. I want to put on the record very clearly at the beginning of my remarks that I do support the bill without any hesitation.

Just one small technicality, Mr Speaker: Normally a private members' bill is not allowed to require government to spend money. Now that's very important, that it's not a government bill. A private member's bill cannot require government to spend money. What it could do is change the Health Insurance Act to require the government to consider it as a schedule. As such, it will still take an intervention by the Minister of Health, Mr Smitherman, as well as Mr Sorbara, to initiate any funding, even if it does pass. It is a technicality that private members cannot require government to spend money.

That being said, I want to put a face and a name to the constituents of my riding of Durham. As has been said by many speakers, the cost is sometimes a barrier to good health and to quality of life. In the sentiment of supporting the bill, there's no question that I want to be on the record. Mr Jim Souch is now deceased but was an original founder with the Charles H. Best Diabetes Centre, which serves Durham region. It has approximately 800 children and young adults with type 1 diabetes. The centre promotes positive integration of disease management in children's daily lives, as well as the daily routines of adolescents, young adults and their families.

By the way, the centre is celebrating its 15th anniversary. It was the first of its kind in Canada when founded in 1989. Of the 800 people being served by the Charles H. Best Diabetes Centre, only 8%—that's about 82 people—are actually on insulin pumps. An insulin pump is considered to be the best tool available for achieving normal blood sugar levels. I might add that the Lakeridge Health hospital centre board is a principal funder of that very important Charles H. Best Diabetes Centre.

The benefits have been clearly outlined by previous speakers, so I won't go over those. But when you look at the high degree of risk of type 1, youth, it's tragic. It's not something that most families have to deal with, but that disease itself is actually growing in Ontario.

I commend the Canadian Diabetes Association as well for their constant effort to inform and educate members. I have their recent correspondence to me of April 19. "Over 850,000 Ontarians—7% of the population—have diabetes." It's very important not just to look at the big numbers but to look at the consequences for those people, their families and loved ones. I'm pleased to state on the record that the Canadian Diabetes Association is here today, with Gary O'Connor, the executive director for the GTA/central south region, which serves our area.

Again, Mr Gravelle, you should be commended.

To put a real face on it, just recently I met with a young artist in my community, David Gillespie. He is

putting together a show that will be at the visual arts centre in Bowmanville sometime later this year. David and his wife, Sylvia Gillespie, have a son, Cameron, who has diabetes. He is one of many Ontarians who would benefit from an insulin pump. He is quite aware of this new technology and has a desire for me to support it.

Tracy and Gary Madgett are also constituents in the riding of Durham. Their daughter, Allison, uses an insulin pump. In their statement, the family has found it offers much more flexibility. Thanks to an insulin pump, children do not rely as heavily on specific schedules for when and what they eat. These are just two of the families who understand the benefits of Bill 55 and how it would improve the quality of life not only for children but for their caring adults.

The insulin pump has been described as acting more like the body's natural processes. It allows the user more flexibility in their meals and, more importantly, it gives more precise control of their blood sugar level. In the long run, it will reduce the complications and improve the quality of life for diabetics.

The marvel of the technology is that it can provide insulin in increments as small as one-tenth of a unit. It's a microcomputer that is about the size of a pager worn around the user's waist. It's similar to this kind of device here. The pump is programmed to deliver a continuous infusion of background insulin. Whenever food is eaten, the user delivers an additional surge of insulin that enables the diabetic to have a more precise control of blood sugar level.

Over two million Canadians have diabetes; 6% of Ontarians, as I said before. If left untreated or improperly managed, it can result in very dramatic complications, including, as has been mentioned, heart disease, kidney and eye disease, as well as nerve damage and, more dramatically, amputations.

1050

The good news is that people with diabetes can look forward to healthy, vital, active and independent lives if they make a commitment to managing their condition. The insulin pump is an excellent preventive medicine tool.

I encourage the Minister of Health and all members here to support this bill. I would hope that in the coming budget, on May 18, Mr Sorbara really does put life to this, because it affects the quality of life of the most vulnerable. This is not something someone induces on themselves; it's a condition they are born with.

On a long-term basis, preventive medicine reduces the cost of health care and, more importantly, it saves lives. By making insulin pumps and supplies an insured service, the province of Ontario has a unique opportunity to show leadership and innovation. As I said, Bill 55 has the potential to save lives and improve the quality of life for thousands of Ontarians. I encourage my colleagues to support this legislation so that the concept of insulin pumps as an insured service can be further considered and approved in the upcoming budget. Again, I leave that as a positive remark.

I know our health critic, Elizabeth Witmer, has spoken on this before. I'm confident that if it was incorporated in the budget, it would be supported. I would encourage members to bring that to the attention of Health Minister Smitherman and, of course, Premier Dalton McGuinty, as well as Greg Sorbara, who would be instrumental.

I want to thank the member from Thunder Bay-Superior North. Again, we on this side of the House are in support of the bill. Thank you for bringing it to our attention, and we look forward to the vote later.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): First of all, it's a pleasure and an honour to have the opportunity to speak on this bill. I want to congratulate the member from Thunder Bay, Michael Gravelle, for bringing this forward.

I want to share with you that, as a newly elected member, there are things you'd like to bring forward in your first term. This happened to be one of the things about which I was hoping to have the opportunity, so I was extremely excited to see this bill being brought forward by the member from Thunder Bay.

It seems like only yesterday—and I remember it so clearly—when I was first elected to city council in Niagara Falls. There was a long-term member on city council named Patrick Cummings, whom I grew to love and respect. Patrick had diabetes. I can remember sitting with him at all the meetings we had at city hall, watching the difficulties he went through with diabetes. I remember when we used to go in at 4 o'clock and have meetings sometimes till 11 o'clock at night. They'd would bring in dinner for us during the course of our meetings. There were those of us who were sitting having dinner, and Patrick was sitting there and having to take his needles. I remember talking with him, to try to understand what this was all about. I remember the operations he had, the two amputations he went through, and I can tell you that was something that has always stayed with me.

Since then, it's been something I've taken to heart. I've learned a lot about it. I have a number of friends who are diabetics, and I wanted to just share this quickly because so much has been said so eloquently by all the members who have spoken about this terrible disease and the opportunity we have to have the insulin pump therapy covered.

I have received a number of e-mails and hundreds of phone calls, but there's one e-mail in particular from a lady, Wendy Anderson, that I wanted to mention and read into Hansard today. What Wendy had said to me was:

"I urge you to support Bill 55 which would add to OHIP coverage insulin infusion pumps and their supplies. The passage of Bill 55 is a life-and-death issue for me.

"I am one of the many persons in your region who does not have private health care insurance. Thus I personally absorb the cost of approximately \$3,000 a year for insulin pump therapy. This is a therapy of necessity for me, not choice.

"The above costs of pump therapy do not include an additional \$5,000 a year I must spend for other diabetes management supplies such as test strips and prescription drugs to control the complications of this disorder. Had I had the financial and medical support to have obtained an insulin pump years ago, I believe I would not require the expensive medical treatments, medical attention and drugs that I do today. If not for insulin pump therapy, I feel I would now be on long-term disability and possibly dialysis, which would cost the Ontario government over \$50,000 a year....

"It is my belief that insulin pump therapy will practically eliminate such health complications for the newly diagnosed children with diabetes ... but only if they can afford it.

"Since starting the insulin pump three years ago, I have totally eliminated chronic high blood glucoses and frequent severe low blood glucoses. My A1Cs ... dropped within the first three months from 9-14 to 5-7!" Wow. "Normal range tests for the first time in 27 years!" I'm asking you to "please support Bill 55 and do what you can to have other MPPs" in the House support this bill.

I'm so excited about the fact that everyone who has spoken on all sides of the House has come out and said they are in support of this. I'm also pleased about the fact that the bill is going to the standing committee on social justice. I have the opportunity of sitting on that committee, so I intend to continue pursuing this. I hope that somewhere in the near future, this bill will be passed and those who need the coverage will receive it. I thank you for having the opportunity to speak on this.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Thunder Bay-Superior North has two minutes to reply.

Mr Gravelle: I am so grateful for the support that I've received from all my colleagues in the House today. I want to give specific thanks to the members who have spoken: the members for Simcoe North, Timmins-James Bay, Prince Edward-Hastings, Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, Durham and Niagara Falls. Each of you spoke so eloquently, and I think re-emphasized the point that this legislation, if it does go through, will make such a huge difference in the quality of life for people with diabetes, whether we're talking about a young person who is contracting it for the first time or somebody such as Paul Beckwith, who, as a middle-aged man, is able to go on the therapy. The value is extraordinary, and obviously the cost savings are extraordinary as well. I'm also grateful that the Minister of Health was here in the House and, as indicated, will be supporting the bill later on when we come to the vote.

I guess what needs to be said is that, listening to the people speak, almost everybody has a personal story they can tell; almost everybody has relatives or friends or family—I was particularly touched by the member for Niagara Falls in terms of the story he was telling of the fellow councillor that he was very close to. I guess what we're hoping is that if we're able to get the support we need for the provision of this service under the Health

Insurance Act for insulin pump therapy, many of these things will be avoided in the future. With the research that's been done out there, it certainly seems to be the case.

I have been touched by the hundreds of e-mails that I've received. I've spoken to a number of people in my own constituency. I want to thank the Canadian Diabetes Association and all the people who are here to support this legislation today. And may I say in particular that I thank Derek Lawrence in Thunder Bay and all those in Thunder Bay-Superior North who wrote me in support of my legislation and my private member's bill. I'm very grateful for that, and I look forward to moving it on to committee.

The Deputy Speaker: That matter having been dealt with, orders of the day.

1100

VOLUNTEERS

Mr Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the outstanding effort and support given by families to their members, and volunteers to their organizations, saves the government billions of dollars and humanizes the face of Ontario, making the province the jewel of Canada and the envy of the world.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr. Peterson has moved private member's notice of motion number 8. Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr Peterson, you may have 10 minutes to begin.

Mr Peterson: Approximately 18 years ago my wife and I made a choice of where we would live. We chose Mississauga South because of the strength of family values there and because of the very active and proactive volunteer groups we have in Mississauga South.

My parents, in raising me, passed on the following comments: "Love, joy, happiness cannot be given away. They always come back to you magnified." In terms of volunteerism, they said, "It is all of us who want to do our little bit. All of us want to light a candle, not just curse the darkness."

In recognizing families and what they have done, I must recognize my family first. I think most of you know that my brother defeated 42 years of Tory government rule. My other brother is Jim Peterson, the trade minister in Ottawa. But the family values were set by my father in his volunteerism in London, Ontario, where he helped build Westminster College, helped build the London Little Theatre, helped finance a YMCA, and helped rebuild a country club.

These were the values with which I was raised. These are the values we find in Mississauga South in the Pallett family, who came there in 1829 and now have about seven or eight different groups of Palletts, who have made huge contributions to Mississauga South: to the Living Arts Centre; the agricultural museum; the Dixie Arena; and the agricultural hall of fame. Drew Pallett is currently the chairman of the Living Arts Centre. I could

go on and on about the Pallett family and what they have accomplished.

Another outstanding family in Mississauga South is the Williamson family, headed by Laurie Williamson, a car dealer who had an autistic child who died prematurely from cancer. Laurie continues his benevolence through supporting hockey. He was named volunteer of the year in Mississauga.

Another family that you know is very famous, Hazel McCallion's family. The real volunteerism in Hazel's family was an award set up by Sam McCallion. Every year the Sam McCallion award is given for the outstanding volunteer in Mississauga. This year it was Elsie Thompson.

Another member who has done outstanding work as a volunteer is with us today, Mr Ron Lenyk, the publisher of the Mississauga News. Ron Lenyk's newspaper published a full-page article on volunteerism and what it means to Mississauga South. You should also know that Ron Lenyk is known as a Ukrainian humorist and performs at no charge at benefits all over Toronto. He has been awarded the Community Living volunteer of the year award; it was roasted. He also won the Citizen of the Year award in Mississauga.

As we go forward and recognize the volunteers, we have many other people in our gallery. I would like to recognize them today. We have Margaret Hughes and her husband, Brigitte Zacal, Brad Shoemaker, Linda Baker, Hugh Baker, Stan Woronko, Silvana Porto, Mike Psodorov, Rada Psodorov, Pat Maloney and Doug Maloney.

All of those people have faced, as volunteers and families, challenges which have required a maximum amount of effort and input and have made both their families' lives and our society's lives better. I will probably not address all of their efforts properly, but let me try briefly.

Brigitte Zacal is a strong advocate for home care for seniors in their homes and is a strong advocate that seniors should be allowed the choice of being cared for in their homes by their loved ones.

Silvana Porto has a severely disabled daughter and has done an excellent job of maintaining her lifestyle with great love and care and financial sacrifice over and above what most of us could afford and yet continues on relentlessly with a smile, asking us to encourage her, and seems to be often just pleased that we are recognizing her problems as she goes forward with very difficult struggles.

Linda and Guy Baker are tremendous advocates for better servicing of seniors in seniors' homes and have been advocates for setting up family councils in seniors' homes so that the ones we love can be better managed and cared for, as they get older in life and as their problems become too acute for them to stay in their homes.

Pat Maloney and Doug Maloney have similar problems, with severe disabilities in their families, and they continue relentlessly to work on behalf of their family members.

There is a category in all of Peel, not just Mississauga South, called the Fair Share for Peel. We in Peel face discrimination caused by geography and fast growth. Most people would say those aren't reasons for discrimination, yet our social services are underfunded by 50%, compared to any other jurisdiction in Ontario. You may ask, "Well, with all that wealth being created, how do you survive?" It has fallen on the backs of volunteers to keep our social services intact at 50% less funding than other areas of Ontario.

I will be making this information available to all members during the legislative session, but I've already had meetings with the various social services committees who understand that this problem was not caused by any ill will, it was caused by the fast growth. When governments froze funding for social services approximately 14 years ago, and our area grew by 50%, it meant that our people in need are getting 50% less funding than other parts of Ontario and Toronto. So we look forward to your collective efforts to help us correct this difference.

The Fair Share for Peel is a group of over 70 organizations in Peel that are fighting this cause. It is headed by Jennifer Grass.

As a member of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, I was able to tour the province and listen to the concerns of many of the people and their social organizations who have not received any increase in funding in the last 10 years. The concern of these people is not for themselves, it is for other people.

I refer specifically to people like Sandy Milakovic at Peel Alert, where she is dealing with very difficult problems of mental health and the support of mental health. She has set up a facility where people can come in, they can be accepted, they can build with confidence and participate and reintegrate into mainstream society. Their organization requires more funding from us to help them continue the outstanding job they are doing in supporting people with mental disabilities.

This government has undertaken the largest and most comprehensive pre-budget consultation of any government in the history of Canada. It is not to avoid making tough decisions, but rather to collect the best information from families, volunteers and stakeholders who have built a wonderful province.

Therefore, I ask all of you to support this resolution. Thank you for recognizing the people from Mississauga South who have joined me today. As we go forward, we should look to these people for the way to most effectively and compassionately govern and build programs for this province.

1110

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to speak in support of the resolution put forward today by the member for Mississauga South and say a word of welcome to the guests who are present in the chamber to hear this debate.

I'll begin by saying to the member for Mississauga South that I agree with the premise of his resolution. To paraphrase the idea that I think he's conveying, helping

others in one's family and helping others in your community by volunteering is very important and, yes, volunteerism does make Ontario the jewel of Canada, as his resolution points out. The question becomes, what will we, as members, do, including the member opposite and his Liberal colleagues. What actions will we take to support volunteers in our cities, towns and rural municipalities all across the province?

As the Conservative spokesperson for citizenship and immigration, I was glad to speak on Monday, April 19, in this House, along with members of the other two parties, about National Volunteer Week and why volunteering is so important to communities and the whole province.

Volunteering is important and has such a profoundly positive impact in large part because of the principles of freedom and service; that is, men, women and youth who volunteer and invest freely of their time, talents, experience and expertise. To put it another way, they get the job done so well because they care so much about what they're doing and whom they are helping, be that a family member, a senior, a disabled person, a child, a patient or a person who needs food or clothing to supplement subsistence living.

Volunteers enhance our quality of life. Without them we would never be able to make that high standard in Ontario second to none in the world. Further, volunteer service is not only given in the spirit of freedom in our democratic society but it also enhances the enjoyment and fulfillment of that freedom for all of us who are residents of Ontario.

That is why I mentioned on Monday, and I'll say again, how much I appreciate the sacrifices made by soldiers and all volunteers, men and women who gave to their country to bring us victory during the wars of the 20th century. I want to remind members of this House how important it is to recognize that service by remembering the 60th anniversary of the D-Day invasion in Normandy in Nazi-occupied France, which is coming up this June 6.

It is a challenge in a peaceful time for those of us living in Canada, and with a peace that we hope and pray will someday be enjoyed by the whole world, to explain to young people how important civic responsibility and volunteering is. While we dearly appreciate the sacrifices of the generations before us, volunteer contributions are, quite frankly, more a matter of choice than of necessity these days. Yes, that choice makes the contribution valuable and very effective, but ensuring a strong future for volunteering must involve planting the seeds of volunteerism in our children and our youth.

I think of the example given to us by Gail Martin, the editor of the Elmira Independent newspaper, in a recent story that appeared about the crews of volunteers who worked all night and into the morning to prepare for the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival earlier this month. She talked about Lavern Brubacher and his mall crew, Sue Jacobi, Lee Ann Caudle and her daughter Jenny, who worked all night alongside an energetic and enthusiastic group of teen volunteers called the Venturers who made a

contest over how fast they could complete their task. The article noted that the volunteers who make this festival happen work hard for months on end and are quite content to do so with little or no public recognition.

I enjoyed my time at the maple syrup festival this year, again serving pancakes on the 9 o'clock to 11 o'clock shift.

Then there's Mary Jansen, a retired health care aide at Chateau Gardens nursing home in Elmira. She retired eight years ago but continues putting in two shifts a week for the Woolwich Community Services organization in Elmira, working at the organization's thrift store in the Birdland Plaza. She sorts through items donated to the store, ensuring they're in good condition. She also returns to Chateau Gardens every day to help a 100-year-old lady get dressed in the morning and she's there to help her get ready for bed at night. Mary also loves to babysit her two youngest grandchildren. I think she's a wonderful example for volunteers of all ages.

I also want to mention my own experience volunteering as a Big Brother and that I had a little brother from 1987 to 1990. His name is Harry Lefler. That experience helped me to understand the rewards of providing guidance and service over time and appreciate the need for those services. The member for Mississauga South may also recall my total commitment to Ontario's Promise, a program aimed at helping young people reach their full potential by making and keeping five promises to them. He will recall that the former member for his riding, his predecessor, my friend Margaret Marland, one of the finest MPPs, who served with great distinction in this House from 1985 to 2003, was minister for children when she helped launch Ontario's Promise in November 2000, along with Premier Harris and retired US General Colin Powell, who of course now serves as the Secretary of State in the United States of America.

Here are the five promises that Ontario's promise promotes: (1) a healthy start for all children; (2) an ongoing relationship with a caring adult; (3) a safe place with structured activities during non-school hours; (4) marketable skills through effective education; and (5) giving back through community service. This program brings together the government, good corporate citizens who donate money and even their employees' time, and the volunteer agencies, all with the common goal of making the future better for young people and for the province. This endeavour was well thought out, and I want to emphasize again for members of this House my sincere belief that the government needs to continue to keep these promises to children and youth alive by continuing to support, and by expanding, Ontario's promise. The fifth promise is essential in keeping the spirit of volunteer service alive; that is, providing an opportunity to give back. This way we demonstrate how volunteering is truly a two-way street. It's a message that we've said to our young people holds true for volunteers of all ages.

Volunteer fire departments are essential in rural and small-town Ontario. These communities rely on them.

Without volunteers, the property taxes needed to pay for full-time firefighters would be prohibitive, to say the least. I say to the member for Mississauga South that it's not just rural communities that benefit from these services; it's people from our cities and suburbs who own vacation properties, cottages and farms in rural Ontario and who would likely find out that volunteer firefighters are the first on the scene for a fire, car accident and other emergency calls in rural Ontario. Volunteer fire departments are strengthened by the service of local citizens and by firefighters who also work in professional departments while serving as volunteers back home. These firefighters have become known as double-hatters.

In some cases, a young firefighter first joins the fire-fighting service as a volunteer. He or she gains valuable experience, as the volunteer fire department spends considerable time and resources training that person. The firefighter finds out whether or not he or she wants to do this for a living. If their commitment strengthens, that volunteer firefighter may be hired, usually as a full-time firefighter in a city or suburban fire department. This is a tradition of long standing in Ontario and demonstrates that volunteering in this province is a two-way street. The training is earned in the volunteer department and the professionally trained double-hatters give back to their community in their own free time.

The problem is that in recent months there continue to be instances where double-hatter firefighters are being told by their union leaders that they must quit as volunteers, that if these people try to give back to their community, they will be barred from the union or thrown out. Either way, that may mean losing their full-time job. This is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario and it is a threat to public safety. Action must be taken by the provincial government.

In May 2002 I tabled Bill 30, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, in response to this problem by protecting the right to volunteer. Bill 30 had two days of public hearings before a standing committee of the Legislature and had support from all the major stakeholders involved in the fire service, save and except the professional firefighters' union. It had a record amount of debate for any private member's bill in the history of this province. Although it wasn't passed into law, I reintroduced it as Bill 130 on the last day the House sat before the election, and a third time earlier this month, now as Bill 52. I believe this bill is a solution to the problem which has been created by the firefighters' union leaders.

1120

Despite an effective one-to-one lobby campaign by the union against my bill with MPPs during the last Parliament, all members of this provincial Parliament have to be reminded that public safety in rural Ontario is not a city-versus-rural issue; it's about public safety. It's an Ontario issue. The MPP for Mississauga South's predecessor, Margaret Marland, knew this. She not only voted for my bill but also helped to obtain the full and highly effective support of Mississauga Mayor Hazel

McCallion, who came to a press conference I organized and spoke in favour of action to protect double-hatters through Bill 30.

In sum, while I will support his resolution this morning, I will also ask him and all MPPs of this House to support Ontario's interest in public safety that is provided on a two-way street by our double-hatter firefighters. I would ask you to support Bill 52.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? I'm expecting a rotation, so the member for Mississauga West.

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I wish to thank and acknowledge the member for Mississauga South in this, Ontario's volunteer week, for introducing a motion that recognizes volunteers, and also the voters of Mississauga West for allowing me the privilege to stand in this place and speak on a subject that is very near and dear to me.

We normally associate volunteer work with charity work, with community groups, with taxpayers' and ratepayers' associations, and with environmental causes, and rightly so. These people work hard, they're well motivated and they achieve great things. I salute them and I salute their contributions. But this morning I'd like to talk about two types of contributions that are often overlooked when we speak about volunteerism: settlement and integration, and human rights.

If we scratch the surface of most Canadians, it doesn't take too many generations to trace most of our lineage somewhere else. If we listen to the family histories of most Canadians, we find an immigrant, a newcomer at some point. Whether it be one or two generations, many of those stories consist of a struggle to get established in Canada and to be in a position to prosper and to contribute to the nation that so many new Canadians have chosen to call home. It's been the efforts and the sacrifices of volunteers that have not only helped new generations of Canadian newcomers find their way to independence, but it has been the efforts of volunteers whose contributions have kept so many lives from falling apart and so many people from quitting after they have come to this country.

I mention in particular from my home region of Peel two organizations, the Peel Multicultural Council and Intercultural Neighbourhood Social Services, both of which I have served as a volunteer down through the years. One program in particular stands out in one of the ways that it brings in volunteers and newcomers to Canada, and that is conversation circles. Conversation circles bring newcomers together with people who have lived here or have grown up here. Conversation circles enable newcomers to take their new language out of the classroom and bring it into their lives. Working with volunteers in conversation circles overcomes the temptation to take the language that you've learned in the classroom and to retreat from it into a cocoon of the familiar, going back home into what is a microcosm of the old country in its language and its customs. Conversation circles help many of us in the mainstream walk back a few generations and gain some insight into some of the

problems our forebears may have had as they came here and struggled to get established. And one of the first challenges in getting established in the new country is to learn the language.

In this vein, I have one story that I recall. At one time I was asked whether I would round out the critical mass and be part of a group that learned introductory Arabic at one of the local community centres. For me, it wasn't going to be my second language—*pour moi, ma langue secondaire est le français*—but it was a challenge. When I went in and spent eight weeks learning Arabic as a third language, I then realized first-hand the challenges that so many newcomers have to overcome, because when I went in there, I couldn't read, I couldn't write and I couldn't speak. To the limit of the teacher's ability, it was all done in Arabic, which is a language as foreign to me as any could be. When I left, I had a whole new perspective on what it took to come here, not being able to speak English, not being able to walk into a store and read the price on the food you intend to buy, not being able to read a street sign, not being able to look at a shop and read the sign on the shop, and how hard it was to get past that point where you could at least walk out into the sunshine and prosper in Canada.

I also want to talk a little bit about an unlikely topic when we discuss volunteerism, and that's human rights. Yet it's nonetheless a vital contribution that Canadians make. It's a contribution that benefits not so much those of us who live here in Canada, but many people abroad whom we've never met and may never meet.

I'd like to illustrate this point, if I may, in a tribute to a Mississauga family whose efforts and sacrifices during an entire decade have contributed enormously to the development of a democratic government in the Republic of Croatia. Josip and Vivienne Gamulin, who live on Clarkson Road in Mississauga, in the riding held by the member from Mississauga South, have contributed enormously, through themselves and through their family, to the development of democracy in Croatia. That has been primarily through their work on human rights.

The member's motion says volunteerism "humanizes" our province and makes it "the envy of the world," and that is certainly true of the contribution made by the Gamulin family. Dr Gamulin graduated in medicine from the University of Zagreb before coming to Canada. While he and his family, a very large family, could have lived a prosperous and comfortable life, they remained concerned about the abuse of human rights back in the former Yugoslavia. Long before the world focused on the brutalities inflicted on the peoples in the Balkans and long before we all learned the phrase "ethnic cleansing," Josip Gamulin poured his free time and much of his personal funds into a campaign to make the world aware that in his former country, people were being killed just for being what they are.

Not long after I met him, he asked me if I would come down to speak at a demonstration at Toronto city hall. He told me it would be important for a non-Croatian to speak. I trusted him and I agreed. I spoke out in favour of a dissident from Albania. I spoke as forcefully as I could

at the time. Some time later, at a party at his home, he introduced me to a man and said, "This isn't the man you spoke in favour of, but this is someone like him." That man said to me, "Were it not for the efforts of those of you in the West who stood up when you didn't have to stand up and who spoke out against the abuse of human rights, I'd have been dead and so would many others like me."

I'll say this for Josip and Vivienne Gamulin: It was their sacrifice that brought a measure of democracy, freedom and fairness in the treatment of their countrymen to the Balkans. Not many Canadians would have benefited from it, and nobody among the group that helped them organize got rich while they did it. Mostly, their efforts have passed unrecognized. But in the Legislature of the province of Ontario now, I recognize those volunteers, like Josip and Vivienne Gamulin and their children, who have taken their time and have stood up and said, "Enough is enough." They have said what's right and what's wrong, and have spoken in favour of human rights and have spoken out against the systematic abuse of it.

I'd like to share my time with other members of my caucus. I thank you for this opportunity to stand and speak on volunteerism during volunteer week.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Volunteerism is really about community-building. In fact, in my time allocated in support of this resolution by the member for Mississauga South, I really just want to take the time that I am permitted here today to respectfully mention the community builders in my riding of Durham.

Service clubs we are all familiar with, such as Rotary, Lions, Kinsmen and others, certainly serve as an example to community builders who have time to add value to the lives of others in many cases. John Bugelli, 10 years with the Newcastle Lions Club; Muriel Burgess, 20 years with Community Care Clarington; Shelley Etmanskie and June Heard, 10 years with the Orono Horticultural Society; Wayne Burrell, Tom Wilson, Maurice Patterson and Rob Rice of the Port Perry Lions Club—all community builders, all people taking time from their lives to give generously to others.

1130

The sporting community, of course, is replete with persons making contributions to young people's lives. There are countless hockey, figure skating, speed skating, volleyball, swimming and soccer coaches, and the list goes on, Mr Speaker. You would know that.

Eleanor Colwell last night held the Port Perry Lions Club agricultural appreciation night. In fact the deputy minister, Frank Ingratta, spoke at that meeting in a volunteer capacity to bring respect to the agricultural leaders in Durham, of which there are many.

Jenny Walhout was just recognized by the Hospice Association of Ontario, not just for Durham but I believe she received the Caldwell award for all of Ontario for hospice work with those in the latter stages of life.

Magda Zoelman of Bereaved Families of Ontario has been widely recognized and is a personal friend, a person

who in her own life experienced tragedy with the death of her son, Dennis, but also and more importantly goes on to make a positive statement about their own personal tragedy.

It's people like Mary Lou Townsley, Jill Haskin, Norma Lewis, Les Trotman, Roger Wharmby, Mary Taylor, Pat Griffin, all members of the hospital auxiliary in Bowmanville. I would be remiss not to mention Greta Brown, an elderly lady who still, to this day—I believe in her late 80s or 90s—is serving in a volunteer capacity with the hospital auxiliary.

Joan Gordon, president of the auxiliary in Port Perry, and Gail Kerry have arranged countless fundraising events, all giving back to their community.

Lois Yellowlees and Alma Langmaid with the Solina Women's Institute have served over 50 years, and people like Vi Ashton, Donna Barkey, Bernice Watson, Blaikie Rowsell, 30 years with the Solina Women's Institute. Women's institutes were one of the original founders of strong rural communities, making a statement not just about the rights of women but the protection of women and family and the values that make Ontario what it is today.

Minnie Zegers from the Orono Horticultural Society has been making their community beautiful—30 years with the horticultural society. Orono is a beautiful little community just off Highways 35 and 115 on the way to the city of Kawartha Lakes in my riding.

The visual arts centre—I note Jean-Michel Komarnicki, chair of the visual arts centre in Bowmanville—has had exhibits here at the Legislative Assembly, maintaining not just the history of the monument of the visual arts centre but also all of the art workshops that go on and putting their time and talent into other people's lives.

Jean and Brenton Rickard are two people who are remarkable for their contribution to many aspects of the community. I think they had 50 years together, and that's each of them; that's 100 years of service, two people in Newcastle, Ontario, the home of the Massey family. They were really the guardians of the community, the builders of the community.

Pauline Storks is a woman who has given not just to the Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority, but is widely respected in local distribution companies, the municipal electric associations. She's served locally and provincially and is a strong voice even in retirement. I think she's nearing 80 years of age and still giving.

Shane Harbinson has just put on an information forum at Queen's Park on the Ontario Volunteer Emergency Response Team. These are people who voluntarily take time out and take training to use in the search and rescue of lost children, some of whom have been in the news in the last while.

Harold Yellowlees, Don Samis and John Buddo have served Big Brothers and Sisters of Clarington relentlessly and tirelessly. Volunteers go on.

Community care strikes me when I think of people like Ernie Roberts, who was just recently recognized for

15 years, retired from General Motors and now continues to have almost a full-time job as a driver.

Mary Lamb and Marion Larmer have 25 years with community care in Port Perry. Marg Tippins from community care in Clarington as well, I believe, has 10 or 15 or more years in community care, which is Meals on Wheels and providing support services in the community.

More importantly, the fair boards, the rural agriculture fairs like the Durham Central Fair: Charles Harris serves as the fair board president.

The list goes on. I would be remiss not to mention the hospital boards. Anne Wright, who's the chair of Lake-ridge Health, a volunteer position, spoke here just recently on Bill 8, Mr Smitherman's bill on wrecking or taking away the power of these volunteer boards. I'm sure he'll relent on that. I'm hopeful he will give the boards their due.

Sitting in the Legislature here today, I have to respect the work that teachers and schools have done. I am happy to introduce my own page from my area, Michael Fattori. Michael is a page from the riding of Durham. Pages are serving in a volunteer capacity in the Legislative Assembly today. I think it's remarkable that when we were in government, we required students to contribute, over their high school years, 40 hours of community service. I think it's just an example of training people or giving them the encouragement and infrastructure to go out and give back to their community.

With respect to Mr Peterson making this resolution here today, I am supportive. I see volunteers as community builders. It is the right thing for each of us to do. I know people in public office are often pressed to go and support organizations—whether it's Big Brothers, or Heart and Stroke, or the Terry Fox run—but all people in any community have not only a right but a duty to serve their community with all the skills and compassion they have, because you make other people's lives better with volunteer contribution.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to say that New Democrats support this resolution. How could we not?

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): It's private members' hour.

Mr Marchese: It's private members' hour, you're quite right, and we are free to do what we want, aren't we? Liberals are quickly learning that you're free to do what you want, especially with private members' bills. You are liberated to do that, so don't allow your whip to say, "No, you can't; you've got to be in solidarity with the caucus." OK? So that you know.

Speaking to this particular resolution, we say it would be very difficult to oppose it, really. It's a friendly motion, it speaks to the whole issue of why it is that we would support volunteers. And why wouldn't we, really?

Why wouldn't we support members of families who support each other, particularly when they face so many problems, some in particular, where families have children with Down syndrome, as I do—a cousin of mine. I

look to them with a great deal of admiration, because the sacrifices they put into servicing the needs of that child—it's just unbearable, unthinkable. I don't know how they do it, but they do it because they are mothers and fathers, and they have brothers and sisters, who obviously want to do it. It's just not something that you question; it's something you do because it's your family. For families who have to deal with issues of autism, which creates incredible stress on the entire family, not just mom and dad but on that individual who suffers the problem and everyone connected, it's an incredible burden. Why wouldn't we praise each and every one of those individuals who commit themselves to the development and the support of their family members.

Yes, we support volunteers—men, women, young and old—who put in a great deal of their time at the service of creating a decent and civil society. We say that democracy would be severely diminished if we didn't have the level of volunteerism that we do in society. We say that people doing good for their families, their neighbours and their society, without the expectation of monetary reward, is one of the foundations of a civilized society. Yes, it is profoundly important for social solidarity and, we are observing, it is becoming more and more important for governments because it saves governments huge amounts of dollars. In fact, volunteerism contributes \$6 billion worth of time. No wonder governments, whether they be Conservatives before them or Liberals—and probably New Democrats if we were there—stand up to say that it saves us a whole lot of time and money and it relieves governments of the burden of having to worry about replacing that volunteer time, because if they did, it would cost a great deal of pecunia to make up for it.

1140

Yes, volunteerism is important for a civil society and social solidarity, and, yes, it saves money, but my worry is the trend that governments are involved in, saying, "We've got to find ways to promote more volunteerism." I suspect that recent governments have seen that in the year 2000, 25% of Canadians devoted their time to volunteerism, and in 1997, it was 32%, meaning fewer people in the year 2000 were doing volunteerism than they were in 1997.

There's a reason for that, I suspect, and the reason has to do with the fact that more and more people are working double and triple time to make ends meet. More and more women are working in the workforce because they have to. It's a necessity for many of them. It's not something some would love to do if they could avoid it. You've got people, men and women, working overtime, triple time, and few of them are finding the time to be able to volunteer.

When the member for Waterloo-Wellington says, "Volunteers do it as a matter of choice, not out of necessity," I've got to tell him that a whole lot of people are doing it because it's necessary. When governments shirk their responsibilities, people get into the field of volunteerism to fill in the gaps. So some do it out of necessity, because without them, nobody else would be doing it.

We're seeing it in the field of education: \$36 million raised by parents alone to fill in the gaps of less government involvement and less money going to our school boards. As a result of that, parents are raising money for essential supplies. We say it's not right. Governments might want to thank people like Cathy Dandy, Cassie Bell and Chris Glover from the Toronto Parent Network. I thank them and governments thank them, but they do it because if they weren't there and if they weren't lobbying governments, it would probably be worse and there would probably be less money going to our school boards. I praise these parents from the Toronto Parent Network. I praise them because if they weren't there, they would be raising \$72 million or \$100 million to make up for government's lack of adequate funding for our school boards and our students. Yes, I worry, and yes, I thank volunteers, but I'm worried that governments are shirking their responsibilities and their social obligations when they put less and less into our school system.

I worry because we have more Out of the Cold programs than we ever did before. More and more volunteers are involved in Out of the Cold programs to help the homeless, to feed them and to house them. It's not right. I praise those volunteers, but I do not praise governments that allow more social organizations and volunteers to run Out of the Cold programs because governments are not in the field of providing the service, presumably because they don't have the money. I have nothing but praise for volunteers, but criticism for governments that are shirking their responsibilities.

I look to the fact that there are more and more shelters in our midst, in Toronto and other places, shelters that are overfilled, and some cannot be housed because there's no room. I praise the volunteers all right, but I attack governments for not keeping up with their social responsibilities.

In nursing homes, we have more and more volunteers filling in because we're giving less and less for staffing purposes. It is said, for example, that hospital patients are more and more reliant on family and friends, not only visiting them, but bringing necessities like toilet paper and Kleenex. It's wrong. I attack governments for shirking their social responsibilities. I praise the volunteers.

I say to this government, yes, we support this resolution, but don't try to go after volunteers to fill in the gaps. Don't go after user fees to try to fill in the gaps. You need to find the money and the courage to go after high-income earners who earn over \$100,000, and bring in the money that you need to make up for those problems that I mentioned. Volunteers cannot do it alone.

Ms Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): I am absolutely delighted to support this resolution brought by the member for Mississauga South. This resolution recognizes the enormous contribution that volunteers across Ontario make to the well-being and health of our communities.

I know that Mr Peterson practises what he preaches. His volunteer activities are well known and well respected. I can also tell you from first-hand experience

that Mr Peterson is one of those people who makes volunteering a memorable and enjoyable experience.

Mr Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): A real leader.

Ms Matthews: He's a real leader.

I also know that the culture of volunteer contribution, the notion that contributing to one's community is simply what all people can and should do to the best of their ability, without regard for personal gain, is a culture and value that is learned from your parents and passed down from generation to generation.

I know that this is certainly a value that the Peterson family shares and actively engages in. Mr Peterson's parents are constituents of mine, I'm proud to say.

Interjection: Pete and Marie, excellent people.

Ms Matthews: Pete and Marie Peterson. They have passed this value down, not only to their children, but to their grandchildren. I'm also proud to say that this is a value that exists in my family as well.

In my riding of London North Centre, many of the services that support our most vulnerable people simply could not exist without volunteers. Matt Read from London, a student trustee and active volunteer, is with us in the gallery today.

Last Friday, I spent the morning in old east London. Those of you who know London will know that is an area of real interest to me and to many in the volunteer sector. I spent the morning visiting some of the services there that simply would not exist without volunteers.

I visited Cooking for Kids at Lorne Avenue school, where parents in the community gather together in the kitchen and prepare food for the students at the school. I visited Ark Aid, a drop-in centre for street kids. I visited Global House, which is a place that supports our newest newcomers to Canada. In fact, many people spend their very first night in Canada at Global House. I visited the Sisters of St Joseph Hospitality Centre, where people not only get a warm meal, but they get a warm welcome as well. I visited the Unity Project, an innovative housing project, mostly designed for young people. I visited the London Intercommunity Health Centre, which provides superb health care for a most vulnerable population.

None of these organizations could survive without the tireless army of volunteers who raise the money, provide the direction, roll up their sleeves and do the work that so desperately needs to be done. I am delighted to have this opportunity to recognize and applaud the volunteers who make my community and communities across Ontario the fine places they are. I could talk for some length on this, but I'm going share my time with the member from Stoney Creek.

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I am always awed and amazed when I go out into my community, and other communities, and I see the work of volunteers. We sit in this House and we wrestle with how we're going to find the money, the resources, the understanding, and the expertise to fix a problem, solve a problem, deliver a program. The volunteers are just out there doing it, and

they're probably doing it in a way that no matter how long we wrestle with it, no matter how long we try to come up with all the nuances, we will never be able to deliver it with the same level of humanity, the same level of caring that volunteers bring to it. It's remarkable and it's invaluable.

1150

The member for Mississauga South mentioned that his family instilled in him that the love and joy and happiness you give out comes back to you magnified. This is something I've experienced first-hand as a volunteer and that I know all of us have as volunteers. It's something you have to experience at first hand to really believe. I encourage everybody who's never been a volunteer in their life to be a volunteer, because you will be giving yourself the greatest gift you possibly can. It will enrich your life in ways you cannot possibly imagine.

One of my personal experiences was with the Big Brothers' in-school mentoring program. I was told when I joined that I was going to be a window on a world for this little girl, a window on a world that potentially she couldn't even imagine existed or that she could become a part of. Well, she became a window on a world for me that I hadn't really imagined, and in some ways, thankfully, I had not been a part of. But in other ways, it was an amazing world. It was a world where volunteers were literally keeping her life afloat in so many ways. Her strength and her spirit were instilled in her by all the people who gave freely of their time and their energy and their lives to her, and I was awed by that.

I have a little favour to do here for the Minister of Health. Minister Smitherman came over, and I'm going to try to get this quote right, because it was a good quote. He said, "Wherever you have the delivery of a social service, the human touch, the gift of the volunteer magnifies the positive impact of that service."

Just this past week, I was at the lunch of the volunteers of Deer Park Villa in my riding in Grimsby—it's a long-term-care facility—and the contribution of those volunteers, the difference they make in the lives of the residents of a long-term-care facility is unimaginable. Many of the people in the long-term-care facility know they are on the final leg of their journey in this life, and that's a very tough reality to face. The volunteers are able to touch them, keep them in connection with their world in a way that the staff just don't have the time to do. So it's an enormously valuable gift that they give those people.

I'm sharing my time as well, but I just want to wrap up by saying—and we've all given examples of volunteer experiences we've had personally—that really the way in which volunteers and strong, caring family members enrich our society and characterize our society with their gifts is countless and priceless, like the stars.

Mr Patten: I have a very brief moment to support this resolution, and I asked if I might make a comment or two because this is an absolutely fundamental issue in our society and a distinguishing feature of a democratic society. If you think about it in those terms, then it

certainly places the responsibility on any government to nurture and support, to encourage and applaud from time to time, the activities of people, the distinguishing factor being that in a free democracy, giving of your time, giving of your resources, giving of money freely wherever you want that to go and to whomever you want that to be expressed in terms of your community is distinguishable.

There are many countries in the world, believe me, where you'd be put in jail for volunteering to fight for human justice or argue against a particular government. We are blessed, to a certain degree, but I take this as a message to all of us, particularly our governments. One of the weaknesses we have in many of our voluntary organizations today is because of some of the inadvertent—not intentional—arrogance of governments thinking they best know how to support something in a community. They launch a program in days when they have lots of money and destroy the fabric of many community-based organizations. Then policies change and they withdraw that, and the community is weaker. So it seems to me that the fundamental premise, which I think probably everyone supports—and I support Mr Peterson for putting this forward—is that we must always ask, is the community, with any of our actions that we take, stronger or is it weaker by virtue of what we do and how we relate? I would hope it would be the former, that indeed we are there to help strengthen the community, to be independent from government as much as possible. I believe the assumption under this is that people in the community know best what services they need, how they can do that and, when they're not there, they give freely of themselves.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Mississauga South has two minutes to reply.

Mr Peterson: May I thank all who spoke on behalf of this motion. As the third Peterson of my generation to enter politics, there was some doubt about what I could accomplish. But with the support of the NDP and the Conservatives, I think my future looks extremely bright.

As we go forward, may we do so in the faith of what volunteers and families have accomplished, a faith that the sum is greater than the total of the parts. As we go forward as the legislative institution that governs Ontario, may we find the most effective and satisfying solutions for the people of Ontario by using the strengths, insights and compassion of families and volunteers.

As encouragement to those families and volunteers who have contributed so much to Ontario, may I offer the words of Shakespeare:

"The quality of mercy is not strain'd,

"It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven

"... It is twice blest:

"It blesseth him that gives" and him that receives.

Thank you for your support today.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for private members' public business has expired.

HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (INSULIN PUMPS FOR DIABETICS), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ (POMPES À INSULINE POUR DIABÉTIQUES)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We'll deal first with ballot item number 13, standing in the name of Mr Gravelle.

Mr Gravelle has moved second reading of Bill 55, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

VOLUNTEERS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We will take the second order of business.

With regard to ballot item number 14, a notice of motion by Mr Peterson, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

We'll call in the members for ballot item number 13. I remind you, this is a 5-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1158 to 1203.

HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (INSULIN PUMPS FOR DIABETICS), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ (POMPES À INSULINE POUR DIABÉTIQUES)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr Gravelle has moved second reading of Bill 55, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act.

All those in favour will please stand.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	O'Toole, John
Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Gravelle, Michael	Parsons, Ernie
Bartolucci, Rick	Hardeman, Ernie	Patten, Richard
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Peters, Steve
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hudak, Tim	Peterson, Tim
Bisson, Gilles	Klees, Frank	Phillips, Gerry
Broten, Laurel C.	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Brown, Michael A.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Bryant, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Runciman, Robert W.
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Scott, Laurie
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Smitherman, George
Craitor, Kim	Mauro, Bill	Sterling, Norman W.
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Miller, Norm	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Milloy, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Mitchell, Carol	Yakubuski, John
Dunlop, Garfield	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Zimmer, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 63; the nays are zero.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96—

Mr Gravelle: Mr Speaker, I would ask that my bill be referred to the standing committee on justice and social policy. We have to get to committee.

The Deputy Speaker: The committee on justice and social policy? Agreed? Thank you.

All matters with regard to private members' public business having been completed, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30.

The House recessed from 1206 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): Grey-Bruce Health Services' Markdale hospital is the only health care facility between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor. The hospital serves a vital role in response to motor vehicle accidents and also responds to the seasonal needs of the area's active skiing community.

For the residents of Grey Highlands, the hospital offers 21 beds for in-patient care, an obstetrical service, general surgery and plastic surgery and employs 89 staff members. These services are provided in a building that is functionally obsolete. Parts of this hospital are over 50 years old and will only be sustainable for five more years. Four accreditation surveys have recommended its replacement. Patient safety, patient confidentiality, operational efficiency and care delivery constraints are driving the need to rebuild.

A new structure is planned for the Grey Gables site. Planning is underway with the county to maximize the benefit of sharing resources between the two health facilities. The community has supported the creation of physician clinic space and has attracted the first new physicians to the area in the last 10 years. The Centre Grey General Hospital Foundation is leading the re-development campaign to replace the current hospital with a building that is efficient, will meet the current and future needs of the community and will serve to retain health professionals in the community.

The community has launched an ambitious fundraising campaign to raise its \$12-million share for a new hospital. I call upon the Liberal government to do its fair share for the new hospital, and I ask the residents of Grey county to give generously to the new Markdale hospital.

COMMENTS ON RADIO

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): For over 25 years, I have taken great pride in shepherding my constituents in the riding of York West and the many wonderful people who make up our community. I therefore rise today to

express my disgust at CFRB's Bill Carroll's contemptuous insinuations against residing in the Jane-Finch area. Such an insensitive, flippant comment made on the air on his morning show is evidence of his blatant lack of respect and lack of understanding.

Our community cannot, and will not, be identified by the criminal element our society objects to and is fighting against. Our community, taxpaying citizens and decent families, desire to live fulfilled lives and to create a better future for themselves and their children.

People such as Dwight Drummond from CITY-TV, Lien Tran from the Vietnamese community, Almaz Reda and staff at the Jane-Finch Community Family Centre, Patricia Williams and staff at the Jamaican Canadian Association, retired 31 Division superintendent Jim Parkin and the community police liaison committee, the Salvation Army and an army of volunteers, religious leaders, such as Pastor Richards and his congregation, the sisters of the Minime order and many others, take their good work outside their walls to reach out to the most needy.

I salute and applaud them all and remind our radio show host Bill Carroll that if influence has been given, I say put it to good use for the betterment of our society so that positive changes can be effected. The choice and privilege we have is the legacy we can choose to leave behind in the lives of others.

SMOKING BAN

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm pleased to rise today to bring to the attention of the Liberal government the important issue of making all public and workplaces in our province 100% smoke-free.

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of premature death, disease and disability in this province. Every half hour, someone dies as a result of a tobacco-related illness. The bottom line is that the province should show leadership on this issue—

Interjections.

Mr Tascona: Mr Speaker, I cannot hear myself trying to speak. The government House leader is just drowning me out.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

Mr Tascona: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The bottom line here is that the province should show leadership on this issue and not only ensure that this Liberal government lives up to their commitment to make "all public and workplaces in Ontario 100% smoke-free within three years" but also ensure that they speed up this promise.

Why wait? Why in three years? Why not do it today? Each day that passes, people are subjected to second-hand smoke. On an issue as important to the health, lives and well-being of Ontarians, I urge this Liberal government to take action today and ban smoking in all public and workplaces.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek

unanimous consent to allow the member from Oxford a chance to rebut the previous member's statement.

The Speaker: I heard a no.

PURIFICS INC

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I want to congratulate Purifics Inc, located in London-Fanshawe, on recently being awarded a contract to supply the NASA space agency with a water and air purification system. The system is to be used on the International Space Station.

Purifics was incorporated in 1993 in London, Ontario. They are 100% Canadian owned and export 80% of their product. They hold six US patents. It's a knowledge-based company that serves the nuclear, petrochemical, agricultural and manufacturing sectors. Their mission is to develop, manufacture and supply purification systems for air, water and soil that provide environmental and economical benefits.

Their first client was New Brunswick Power, which is using Purifics technology to clean heavy water from CANDU reactors.

All their technologies are built from scratch. They are known by many, including the US navy, as the best available technology.

I congratulate Purifics co-owners Brian Butters and Tony Powell on their recent success. I am proud to have a forward-thinking, knowledge-based company like Purifics in my riding of London-Fanshawe. I know that we will hear of more successes from this company in the future.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I rise in the House today to remind the new McGuinty government of their promise to cut auto insurance rates by 10% within 90 days of forming government—or is it really 20%, as was mentioned during the recent election campaign by many Liberal candidates?

This morning, I read with great interest an article by the Toronto Star's Richard Brennan entitled "Drivers Fume at Rate Hikes." Mr Brennan mentions in his article that Finance Minister Greg Sorbara now claims that the 10% figure is really just an average. Try telling that to hard-working taxpayers in this province whose rates are going up by 20%, 30%, 40%, and 50% more.

In September of last year, our leader Ernie Eves, who at the time was Premier of this province, warned insurance companies to lower premiums for the drivers an average of 15% or legislation would be passed to roll back rate hikes.

Richard Brennan further writes in his article, "The then government introduced regulation changes allowing companies to pass on savings to motorists, but the Liberals 'sat on them' for six months and the companies went ahead and increased premiums. It wasn't until

January that the Liberals started putting the breaks on premium rates."

If the Liberals meant what they said during the election, the 10% reduction would have already been in place by the end of January 2004. Not only did they break their election promise on cutting auto insurance rates, but the Liberals also tried to conceal the fact that they had recently approved a 28.5% average rate increase for the industry-run Facility Association. This is the only option for insuring drivers who cannot get coverage through regular insurers.

Then there's the question of the other 10% of the 20% rate cut that made Liberal candidates proud as peacocks during the election. Apparently, motorists were expected to deliver this 10% cut themselves by reducing their own coverage.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I would like to take this time to recognize National Volunteer Week. Without a doubt, many of us have seen the tremendous things that can happen when kind souls volunteer their time for the sake of others.

Within my riding of Mississauga East, we have many organizations that embrace all of the qualities that reflect true community heroes. Groups such as the Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre, the ICNSS, the Volunteer Centre of Peel, the Square One Older Adult Centre and so many others are all contributing to the growing community within Mississauga.

I'd like to say thank you to all of the volunteers living within Mississauga East. You have helped to create not only a stronger community but also a stronger province. Your efforts are invaluable and will always be greatly appreciated. As you are all aware, this government is about growing strong communities. We will not be able to do this without the involvement of volunteer organizations that continue to provide outstanding services.

To my fellow members: I ask you to take this opportunity this week and in the future to meet and support the many volunteers who help to keep Ontario the best province to live in.

1340

SERVICE DE DIALYSE

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): Je vais prendre l'occasion de soulever une question que je pense est assez importante pour les résidents de la région de Hearst au nord de l'Ontario. Comme on le sait, on a passé un projet de loi ce matin qui regarde toute la question autour du diabète pour mettre en place ce qu'on appelle « insulin pumps » pour ceux qui en ont besoin. Un problème à travers la province est que ceux qui ont besoin des services de dialyse ont parfois de grosses difficultés d'accès aux services.

Je veux amener à l'attention de l'Assemblée, comme je l'ai fait déjà, la situation de Hearst. On a, à ce point-ci,

environ cinq ou six personnes qui ont besoin des services de dialyse. La seule place où on peut avoir la dialyse dans cette région est à Kapuskasing, pour les gens qui ont besoin des services et qui ont besoin de se déplacer au-dessus de 500 kilomètres pour se rendre à leur traitement au moins deux fois par semaine. Le problème, comme on le sait, est que les routes ne sont pas toujours les meilleures, spécialement en hiver. C'est pour ça qu'on travaille sur une initiative pour mettre en place pour la communauté de Hearst, à l'Hôpital Notre-Dame, un service de dialyse.

Je vois mon ami le ministre de la Santé, qui est ici, et je demande au ministre s'il est capable d'accélérer la recommandation qui était faite par les services de santé régionales pour assurer qu'on mette en place les services de dialyse à la ville de Hearst où l'on en a besoin.

WATER QUALITY

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Last night I attended a public meeting in my riding where about 100 church leaders and concerned citizens gathered to discuss regulation 170 of the Safe Drinking Water Act. They came to the Hebron United Church to talk about the cost of the engineering reports, the regulation demands, to wade through its confusing clauses and voice displeasure about what they see as generally unreasonable regulation. There were many questions as to why rural churches had to abide by regulation 170 because those facilities use a single private well, not unlike domestic wells at their homes, which are exempt and can provide safe drinking water with simple ultraviolet treatment.

The minister stood in this House yesterday and told us she agreed the regulation is flawed, and that she has directed staff to provide her with recommendations on how to remedy the situation. Yet, staff continue to enforce this regulation in rural Ontario when their minister knows it doesn't work. Hebron United is facing a \$12,000 bill to meet ministry demands, and other church leaders at the meeting told me these costs are far beyond what they can manage.

Minister, I urge you to immediately inform rural communities that you will not enforce regulation 170 until the government is ready to implement recommendation 84 of the O'Connor report and provide funding to these rural churches and halls so it will not be your actions that close these facilities.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I rise today to mark the 89th anniversary of the Armenian genocide. April 24, 1915, was the start of a planned and systematic campaign to eradicate the Armenian people from present-day Turkey, the last century's first case of ethnic cleansing. One and a half million Armenian men, women and children were brutally killed.

At the time, the world community sat idle and did nothing. Thus, the stage was set for other genocides and

human tragedies. In fact, upon unveiling his final solution for the Jewish people, Adolf Hitler noted to his aides that the world would not lift a finger because, in his words, "Who today remembers the Armenians?"

This Assembly in 1980, along with the National Assembly in Quebec, recognized this tragic event. Yesterday the House of Commons did the same thing. This open wound cannot heal without achieving justice, justice cannot exist without the truth, and the truth must be recognized.

On April 25, many of my colleagues from this assembly and I will be in the Armenian Community Centre in Toronto to commemorate the first genocide of the last century. I urge you and all of us to commemorate this event with the Armenian community of Toronto. I'm proud to be a member of this assembly that has long spoken out on this issue and I commend members from all sides of the House, past and present, for their leadership on this matter, in particular the member from Don Valley East, David Caplan, and the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, Gerry Phillips, who have long spoken out on this issue.

MEMBER'S CONDUCT

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of personal explanation: Honourable members, last week when I left the Chair, I made certain gestures to the member for Erie-Lincoln that subsequently have become the subject of a point of privilege in this House. My intent was, in fact, not to call out the member, but rather to invite him behind the dais to explain why I'd ruled the way I had. This was in response to his repeated requests to cite the rule.

I certainly intended no disrespect for the member or for this House. Having said that, I regret that the gesture has clearly been interpreted otherwise by the member for Erie-Lincoln.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Time for oral questions. Oh, I seem to be pushing the day along too quickly.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LCBO DEPOSIT AND RETURN ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004

SUR LES CONSIGNES ET REMISES

EXIGÉES PAR LA RAO

Mr Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 61, An Act to amend the Liquor Control Act to require the Liquor Control Board to establish a deposit and return system / Projet de loi 61, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les alcools pour exiger que la Régie des alcools crée un système de consigne et de remise.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It being Earth Day, I thought it appropriate to introduce this bill. The bill amends the Liquor Control Act to require the Liquor Control Board to establish programs to ensure that all liquor sold to the public on or after July 1, 2005, is in containers for which a deposit is charged at the time of sale and refunded on the return of a container.

There are many successful return programs across the country, including British Columbia, and I see this as a first step toward a comprehensive deposit return system to reduce waste going into our landfills, reduce litter and reduce emissions and other pollutants.

WASTE DISPOSAL SITE 41 IN THE TOWNSHIP OF TINY ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LE LIEU 41 D'ÉLIMINATION DE DÉCHETS DANS LE CANTON DE TINY

Mr Dunlop moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 62, An Act to prevent the disposal of waste at Site 41 in the Township of Tiny / Projet de loi 62, Loi visant à empêcher l'élimination de déchets sur le lieu 41 dans le canton de Tiny.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Again, on Earth Day, the bill prohibits the disposal of waste at site 41 in the township of Tiny, which is located approximately four kilometres north of the village of Elmvale and four kilometres south of the village of Wyevalle. The bill revokes an environmental approval that has been issued in connection with the possible disposal of waste at the site. The bill extinguishes certain causes of action that may exist in respect of the site, and the bill entitles the county of Simcoe to compensation from the crown with respect to certain expenses if the Legislative Assembly authorizes the payment of compensation. This bill parallels the Adams Mine Lake Act that was introduced recently.

1350

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EARTH DAY

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): It is a pleasure to address the House on this very special day for the people of Ontario, the people of Canada and people around the world as we recognize Earth Day.

Earth Day began as a spontaneous grassroots protest in 1970 against the abuse being heaped upon the environment. The first Earth Day focused on pollution teach-ins at dozens of college campuses. It was the birth of the

environmental movement and inspired the creation of clean air and water laws across North America.

Today, Earth Day is actively celebrated by 500 million people in 180 countries around the world, with 6 million in Canada alone. This morning I joined students in Scarborough to plant trees that will improve their local environment and remind them that their actions can change the world. The environmental movement has come a long, long way. Environmental protection is now a shared value and this government is committed to promoting conservation in our water and energy, and reducing the waste we produce.

When Ontarians voted, they voted for change. They voted for bold initiatives on environmental protection and natural resources management. We have been charged with reversing the course set by the former government, whose policies led us all to question whether the water in our taps was safe to drink, to worry about the effects of increased smog and to doubt there was a long-term plan for overflowing landfill sites and mounting garbage.

Our efforts start by ensuring that the air we breathe is clean and the water we drink is safe. That is why it is time for bold initiatives.

We are working with all interested parties—environmentalists, scientists, researchers, ratepayers, our youth and people in the business community—to protect the environment. There is so much at stake. For example, the sickness and health effects from smog and poor air quality cost Ontario taxpayers and business \$1 billion annually in lost productivity and health care system resources. Imagine the benefits to our society if we cut smog by one quarter, which I believe is readily achievable. What impact would that have on our economy, on health care and on our government deficit?

The McGuinty government is committed to environmental protection and leaving this province better than we found it. This requires curbing urban sprawl, fostering healthy communities and supporting community involvement in planning. It means making the preservation of our water, air and land central to our daily discourse, debate and decisions. It means a new way of thinking for everyone.

The McGuinty government is moving rapidly to protect the air we breathe and the water we drink, and to ensure our waste is handled properly. We have introduced the Adams Mine Lake Act that would, if passed, end the uncertainty and long debate about that project. The local community has repeatedly voiced concerns about the Adams mine landfill. For this government, the protection of our communities is of paramount concern.

The previous government left many programs and departments without resources for too many years and the Ministry of the Environment was a favourite target. The ministry was orphaned, its funding decimated, its staffing cut severely.

We cannot change this overnight, but one of my first actions was to announce a 25% increase in the number of water inspectors. In his Walkerton report, Justice O'Connor was clear that source protection is fundamental

to ensuring safe drinking water, but for too long source protection was missing from Ontario's water policies. Not any more. Source protection, making sure our lakes and rivers and underground wells are safe from contamination, is the hallmark of our approach.

This government has taken a significant step to end the reckless giveaway of Ontario's precious water resources. We placed a one-year moratorium on new or expanded permits to take water for uses that remove water from watersheds. This moratorium buys time to review and improve the process for issuing permits to take water. We will not grant new permits until we are certain there is enough water in the watershed for this and future generations. The blank cheque days of taking this precious resource are over.

We are taking steps to establish a greenbelt in the Golden Horseshoe that will limit urban sprawl, protect and preserve the quality of life in our communities, provide public access to greenspaces, protect both water quality and quantity, and improve the quality of the air we breathe.

We are also taking action to improve air quality. We are committed to shutting down the coal-fired generating plants that produce smog-causing pollutants and greenhouse gases. It will not be easy, especially given the shambles of Ontario Power Generation and the strains on our power grid, but there are alternatives. I am heartened by the success of projects such as Toronto's first windmill.

The McGuinty government is also getting tough with polluters. I have warned industry that we will have zero tolerance for spills and illegal emissions. I sent the environmental SWAT team to Sarnia to examine the petrochemical industry. Earlier this week, I introduced the Industrial Pollution Action Team that will give me expert advice on what needs to be done to ensure there are no more spills.

This government has also taken a different approach to waste disposal. The amount of waste we produce is still growing too fast, yet we are recycling and diverting far too little. Our recycling rates, though improving, are too low, especially compared to some other provinces. We can do better, and we will. Our goal is to divert 60% of waste from landfills, or about double what is being diverted today. Together we can reach this target by 2008.

We recognize it will not be easy. It will require decisive action to promote recycling and other waste diversion. We need to look beyond merely finding a place for the waste we produce and focus on producing less waste in the first place. We need to value conservation over consumption. We need to work with our partners and provide them with the tools that will be effective for them to achieve our goals. Our long-term waste management strategy will be sustainable and it will protect the environment.

Clearly we face significant challenges, but we also have exciting opportunities to create unprecedented safeguards for Ontario's air, water and land. For too long this province's natural environment has suffered and we

have suffered. It's now our turn and our responsibility to change that, and we gladly take on that role.

1400

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): Today is a significant day on the environmental advocacy calendar. Today is Earth Day.

More than 100 countries are celebrating Earth Day. Earth Day's mission is to improve the state of the environment by encouraging individuals and communities to develop effective partnerships and action plans.

On Earth Day and during Earth Week, which runs through Sunday, April 28, Ontarians and all Canadians are invited to reconfirm their well-documented personal commitment to the environment. People across the country and around the world are participating in community events, such as tree planting, cleanups, concerts, workshops and parades. On behalf of the official opposition, which has a stated commitment to ensuring our tax dollars are wisely and effectively used to protect the environment, I invite all members of this House to take part in today's events.

Over the last eight years, Ontario became a leader on the environmental front. I trust that the tradition of respecting the air we breathe, the water we drink and the land we cherish will continue. Ontario has come too far to turn back the clock. Our environment is our future. In the spirit of Earth Day, we look forward to working together on this issue of utmost importance, despite the Minister of the Environment's perspective on the environment.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind all Canadians that it's only through individual actions that our children, our neighbours and our communities will be encouraged to continue to work toward making every day Earth Day. And I would just note that there is an Earth Day celebration this Saturday at the Samuel Wilmot Nature Area.

Earth Day is a commitment that is shared by all. I would like to congratulate all who are going to take part in Earth Day today and celebrate this Earth Week.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I also wish to address and to be part of this province's celebration of Earth Day—and, in some cases, Earth Week—this Earth Day, April 22. With respect to the nation of Canada, it's the 15th annual recognition of Earth Day, truly a day to not only celebrate our environment but to bear witness and to realize and to communicate to others how important it is to protect and cherish what we have in this great province of Ontario.

We recently have been debating recycling, as the minister made mention, and debating the so-called Adams Mine Lake Act. After 15 years of debate and environmental assessment, communication and consultation with key stakeholders, communication between both government and the private sector, it has come to this: It looks like the Adams mine will not be a landfill. The province of Ontario will continue to shift well over a million tonnes of trash to the state of Michigan, about 125 tractor-trailers a day.

Michigan and that part of Michigan in Sumpter township and subdivisions of Detroit are not having a good Earth Day. They are seeing garbage coming from Canada. The political will in Michigan is resisting this trend to the extent that the Democratic contender for the presidency, John Kerry, has indicated that if he becomes President, with the assistance of the Kennedy family, he will review the importation of garbage to Michigan, a Great Lakes state, within the first 120 days of his reign as President.

This government, and I will mention the NDP as well, has decades of recognition and a record with respect to environmental legislation. I will say that both the NDP and the PCs have done the heavy lifting with respect to legislation. We raised this question in debate two days ago. We posed the question to the government: Name one piece of legislation passed by provincial Liberals in the province of Ontario. There's a list of NDP legislation, a list of Progressive Conservative legislation. We put the challenge on this Earth Day: Name one piece of Ontario Liberal environmental legislation. I hear no response.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): On behalf of New Democrats and of our environment critic, the member for Toronto-Danforth, Marilyn Churley, I am pleased to take part in this celebration of Earth Day and in rededicating ourselves to saving our Earth.

Clean water, clean air and unpolluted land are not things we can take for granted. They come about because citizens and governments take action. The result of neglecting the environment is not just bad for the environment but lethal to human health. We found out at Walkerton just how vital protecting the environment is to public health. When tax cuts are placed ahead of investments in water systems, sewer systems and good, well-enforced pollution laws, catastrophe can result.

There are a number of environmental issues on the agenda of the province today, and the Liberal government will be judged on whether or not, and how well, they deal with them.

On water, the refusal of the Liberal government to pay its fair share has meant that new water regulations have been a serious financial burden on small towns, rural municipalities, trailer parks and property owners in general. We have already seen trailer parks and community halls shut down because they cannot afford the new regulations financially and the province refuses to help. The Liberal refusal to help out has been quite evident. The minister was very clear in response to the member for Toronto-Danforth and the member from Nickel Belt: People and communities are on their own. The government should be ashamed. The Liberal government must take responsibility for safe water instead of dumping the cost onto communities that can't afford it, which was the Conservative solution.

On air, the Liberal position before the election was: "All coal-fired plants will be closed by 2007." Now, after the election, the Minister of Energy tells his Bay Street friends at the Empire Club that the coal plants will only be closed when the government "is totally satisfied that

adequate alternatives are in place before we replace coal." I think we know what that means: It won't be 2007, it won't be 2008, it won't be 2009 and it won't be 2010, either. This is sounding more and more like the Conservative policy.

The truth is that the Liberal government is fiddling while coal burns. In seven months they have done nothing to replace even one kilowatt of coal capacity. In fact, all they've done is hire the same consultant the Conservatives hired. And do you know what? He's going to give the Liberals the same advice he gave the Conservatives, which means we'll see the same Conservative policy all over again, but this time in a red package.

This government has also announced a conservation plan, but one that looks like more spin than substance. The government is putting in only a small fraction of the money that's needed for incentives to consumers. They say they're relying on so-called smart meters. The problem with smart meters for residential consumers, as we saw in California, is that they deliver very small savings at a great price. They require a great deal of effort and expense to put them in place, but they deliver very little in terms of energy conservation. The government should put that effort and that money into ensuring that every home in Ontario has a home energy audit and that there are financial incentives for people to undertake aggressive retrofitting, so that real energy efficiency and conservation can happen.

To wrap up, the government has done the right thing on the Adams mine, but they have failed to take responsibility to help Toronto and other municipalities find a solution for their garbage; they have introduced green-belt legislation but are allowing a new town to be built on the Niagara Escarpment; they have said they're in favour of cleaning up brownfield sites so they can be redeveloped, but they haven't provided municipalities with any money to enable them to do that.

Yes, there is a long way to go on the environment. We, as New Democrats, will be keeping a close watch on this government, because despite their many promises, it looks like a lot of Liberal spin.

1410

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Let me draw your attention to the Speaker's gallery. We have with us today a delegation of health officials from the Republic of Kazakhstan, led by the Honourable Erbolat Dossayev, Minister of Health for the Republic of Kazakhstan and Mr Samat Zhanabay, Consul of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Toronto. Please join me in welcoming them warmly to the assembly.

TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Under Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice, I refer to page 312, where it entitles members to

make personal statements, so I wanted to do so at the first opportunity. I wanted to apologize and congratulate the member for York South-Weston and the Minister of Economic Development and Trade on the occasion of the victory of the Toronto Maple Leafs over the Ottawa Senators, and to make good on my bet—could I get a page? I also wanted to extend my sympathies to Jacques Martin, who has joined the 25,000 unemployed Ontarians today.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): That's not a point of order, of course.

ORAL QUESTIONS

USER FEES

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday Dalton McGuinty said that in the pre-budget consultations the people of the province said, "Yes, we should be paying more user fees." Can you name me a single Ontario taxpayer group that said that?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I appreciate the question from my friend, simply because it gives me an opportunity to talk about the unprecedented level of consultation and the success of the consultations that we had prior to this budget. I think people around the province know about some of the town hall meetings that gained some profile in the daily and weekly press. I personally had an opportunity to participate in 14 pre-budget consultations, each one of them offering new insight into the mood and the predisposition and where the people of Ontario looked for us to lead as we present the budget.

We didn't write down names, but I'll just tell you in terms of—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Sorbara: We didn't put, "Recommendation: user fees, name." Just let me say that there is a marvelous degree of goodwill, and the people of Ontario look to us to do the following things, sir: to improve the quality of public services, to repair the finances of this province—and I see you're standing, so I'll wait for the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Exactly. Supplementary.

Mr Baird: I'm not just shocked; I'm stunned. The Minister of Finance today has hung the Premier out to dry. He can't name a single person, he can't name a single group, who came before any public hearings anywhere in the province and said, "I want more user fees." Dalton McGuinty believes that the people of Ontario want more user fees. Minister, do you believe that the people of Ontario want more user fees?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I will neither agree nor disagree with my friend's comment that he is stunned. I will just leave that out there, and I'll have others comment on that. But I will tell him, to sort of revive him and bring him back to consciousness, that there were many people in

the consultations who, when considering public services, said, "Yes, it would be fair if we paid the true cost of that service," whether it be water or whatever, because we provide a wide variety of services. That was a theme that occurred from time to time during the consultations. What the Premier said yesterday simply reflected what we heard during the course of the consultations.

Mr Baird: I learned in school in Bells Corners in Nepean that if you couldn't use a specific example, the teacher would say you had made it up.

I have in my hand the all-party report of the standing committee on finance. This is a committee of MPPs of all parties who travelled the province and heard from literally hundreds of individuals and groups representing millions of people in Ontario. Not one single person, not one single group, said anything about wanting more user fees.

Let's look at the report. Page 3: "Many of those proposing tax increases called for a progressive system, rejecting ... user fees...." Page 14: "Many witnesses urged the government to resist ... imposing user fees...." Mr Speaker, look at the recommendation made by your members of Parliament: Recommendation 34 recommends abandoning the notion of user fees for seniors. There isn't one single person who recommended this. All parties agreed on this report after touring the province. Would you not be honest with the people of Ontario and admit that Dalton McGuinty simply made this up yesterday?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I'll be honest with my friend from Nepean-Carleton. During the course of our consultations we heard not only about the financial deficit left to us by the previous administration; we also heard about the infrastructure deficit, we heard about the social deficit, and we heard about the deficit in education and in health care. So I want to tell my friend that he ought not to stand up and preach any doctrine espoused by him and the previous administration.

As far as the report is concerned, I have read the report and I think the parliamentary committee did a magnificent job. The work of that committee, along with the other consultations, will result in a budget being presented—I invite my friend to be here on May 18—that will begin to repair the damage done to this province by eight years of Tory administration.

Mr Baird: The thing about this parliamentary report is that all the meetings were conducted in public and there's a verbatim transcript of everyone who appeared. Unlike you, who can't remember a single soul who was begging for new user fees, this report doesn't lie, and your members of Parliament endorsed the report.

During last fall's election, Dalton McGuinty looked every Ontario taxpayer in the eye and said, "I won't raise your taxes." Let's look at your record over the past six months. You've broken your promise and raised hydro rates; you've increased taxes on our small businesses; auto insurance rates are up; and taxes on seniors and working families are up as well—all after Dalton McGuinty spent \$4 million to run TV ads when he looked

every Ontario taxpayer in the eye and said, "I won't raise your taxes."

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member clearly implied, and said directly, that the finance minister lied, which in my understanding is not parliamentary language and is completely false. I would ask you, Mr Speaker, to review Hansard, and if the member did, then he ought to withdraw the implication.

The Speaker: What I heard the member state, and I can check Hansard, is that "this report doesn't lie." I will check the record.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Should Hansard reflect differently beyond that, I will get back to you on the matter.

Mr Baird: I have a simple question to the minister, one on which he owes a direct answer to the people of Ontario. I want to know, taxpayers want to know, vulnerable seniors want to know, do you believe that a new user fee is a tax? Will you answer that question directly, Minister?

Hon Mr Sorbara: Firstly, Mr Speaker, as to the point of order, I am not concerned about it. I have never found the member's questions to be very deeply rooted in the truth, so we'll take the question as he presents it.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister, I think you know that was unparliamentary. Would you mind withdrawing the comment?

Hon Mr Sorbara: They're rooted in the truth. The question is, how deeply?

To get to my friend's question—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Let's settle down a bit.

Let me start again. Minister, I heard some unparliamentary words. Are you ready to withdraw that comment?

1420

Hon Mr Sorbara: Certainly, if it was unparliamentary, I will withdraw it.

I want to say to my friend, apropos, first of all, the consultations that we heard, that the level of concern about how a province that went through eight and a half years of very strong economic growth under your administration could leave such a horrible deficit in terms of the quality of our public services: If there was any theme that connected all the submissions we heard, it was that theme as well. The fact that we inherited a \$5.6-billion deficit is only one element of the deficit that we will begin to repair and turn around when we present the budget.

Mr Baird: I say to the minister opposite, boy, have times changed and, boy, has the tune changed since you folks were on this side of the House. When your band of rat packers sat on this side of the House, let's look at what you said: You called user fees "insidious." Sandra Pupatello, our good friend from Windsor, said, "You can call them taxes or you can call them user fees."

Would you now admit, Minister, that your plan about introducing massive new user fees is all about quenching the thirst for new spending and big government, and that it violates the trust the people of the province of Ontario placed in you? Will you do that, Minister?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I'll tell my friend that if he is using this forum to suggest that we are going to bring in a budget with massive new user fees, then he is misrepresenting not only the consultations that we've had, but the budget that we'll be presenting.

I want to tell my friend about user fees. I want to remind the people of this House and this province about the extent to which university tuitions, for example, skyrocketed in the eight and a half years that they were in power. I want to talk about the charges for seniors living in long-term-care facilities.

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): The 407.

Hon Mr Sorbara: My friend the Minister of Natural Resources mentions the 407. I could spend the rest of the afternoon on Highway 407 if he wants to talk about user fees.

Mr Baird: Six years ago in this place, Dalton McGuinty said, "Taxing our seniors with new drug user fees" puts us on a pathway "to destroying some of the things that have made this province a great province." And in the leaders' debate on December 23, McGuinty pronounced, "We will not raise taxes one cent on Ontario families."

Minister, I have a direct question for you: What do you say to the senior living on a fixed income in Ontario who feels that she has been misled by you and your political party?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I would say to all seniors in the province that, as they listen to the budget, they will see themselves reflected in the budget and they will see that we are taking steps to redress some of the damage that has been inflicted on their lives over the course of the past eight and a half years. Not that we will be able to do it all, but I want to tell my friend that the extent to which, in any area of public policy, we have got to start to turn this province around—I'll just take one; I'll just take health care for a moment. The deficits left in our hospitals over the course of eight and a half years: \$850 million in deficits left by their administration.

Those folks over there worshipped at the altar of tax cuts. They destroyed the revenue base of this province and they allowed public services, during a period of great economic growth, to deteriorate to unprecedented proportions. That is their legacy, and that's the one we're going to turn around.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Acting Premier. Yesterday Mr McGuinty indicated that the government intends to produce a Conservative copycat budget on May 18. Under the Liberals, the well off will get to keep the 35% tax cut

they got under the Conservatives, but everybody else will be hit with new user fees, copayment fees, administrative fees and anything else that you can hit lower- and modest-income people with. Last week it was the \$3.99 breakfast; now we find out it may be more highway tolls, it may be driver's licence fees, marriage licence fees, birth certificate fees.

My question is this: Why does the Liberal government think it's so important that the well off keep their 35% tax cut, while you go after those with low and modest incomes?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): The Minister of Finance will respond to this.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I can simply tell my friend from Kenora-Rainy River that the Premier, as we speak, is speaking on education, and the improvements we will begin to see as a result of the initiatives already taken in Ontario and about to be taken under the umbrella of the budget will be very impressive indeed.

We have already begun, for example, to assist in public transit in the city of Toronto. Is he against the revenues that we gave the TTC to avoid a fee increase there?

I don't think my friend from Kenora-Rainy River is going to talk about the impact that his government had on, for example, hydro or the insurance industry. All I can do is invite him to be here on budget day, and I think he will be duly impressed with the measures that we take.

Mr Hampton: The question was this: The Premier warned yesterday that your government is looking at all forms of revenue and fee increases. Now, if you want to debate that, you can debate that with the press gallery. Good luck.

The point is this: We're seeing already in the province higher water fees, higher hydro rates, higher auto insurance rates, municipalities forced to raise property taxes because you weren't there with the two-cents-a-litre gas tax. For someone with an income of \$100,000 a year, all of these fee increases—copayment fees, administrative fees, user fees—may not matter, but for someone who has an income of \$20,000, \$30,000, \$40,000, these are unfair taxes; they are regressive taxes.

So I ask the question again: I thought you said "choose change" in the election. Why are you promoting a budget where those who got a 35% tax cut, the very well off, will keep it; meanwhile, those with the lowest income or a modest income will be hit harder than ever? Why do you look very much like the government you replaced?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I know my friend from Kenora-Rainy River would like us to become involved in a debate and speculation on what is or is not going to be in the budget, and I'm probably the only member of this House who really can't participate in that. I simply will tell him that our objective from the day we were elected was to bring forward a balanced budget, to begin to put this province's finances back in order.

I have said on other occasions that we are looking at ways of raising non-tax-based revenues, and we continue

that search. I know my friend engaged in the speculation on the \$4 exemption to prepared meals. I can tell him simply and straightforwardly that that measure never really got past first base, never really passed first muster, but there was a lot of hoopla about it, so we made an announcement that it had fallen off the radar screen quite some time ago.

I will tell him that when we present the budget, sir—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. New question.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Again to the Acting Premier, McGuinty math is sweeping the province, except it doesn't add up for people who have to renew their auto insurance. Instead of the 10% or 20% reduction in insurance rates that the Premier promised before the election, people open the envelope and, surprise, surprise, it's a 10% or 20% increase. Renewal notices tell us that McGuinty math doesn't work very well.

Can the Acting Premier explain this new McGuinty math to Zygi Fila, to Keith Simpson, and to thousands of other people who are getting insurance notices where there's no 10% reduction; there's a 10% or 20% increase? Can you explain how a promise to reduce auto insurance rates has become an increase in auto insurance rates?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): Since the Minister of Finance answered this question yesterday, I will ask him to answer it today.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): Far be it from me to be an adviser to the member from Kenora-Rainy River, but I just do not think he has any credibility at all on the issue of insurance rates. My friend from Kenora-Rainy River was part of a government that changed automobile insurance premiums in this province in 1994 in a dramatic way, which led to the beginning of almost 10 years of rate increases. They made those changes, and the system has been under attack ever since. And then in the interim, he came again to the electorate and proposed public automobile insurance, the models adopted in other provinces where the benefits available to accident victims are a quarter of what they are in Ontario. I just tell him that we will not be adopting the proposals made by him. We will continue with our program, which will result in dramatically reduced rates for auto insurance premiums in this province, but not at the cost of victims' rights.

1430

Mr Hampton: You can recite all that Fraser Institute claptrap you want. The fact of the matter is, it was your Premier who said that first you would freeze rates and then you would reduce them by 20%. My question is, what's happening to that promise? Because it looks now like it was a con game, a sham.

Let me give you another example. Christopher Horsup of Hanmer, Ontario, has a perfect driving record. He

received his renewal notice in just the last few days—a 12% increase. When he asked his broker why his rates went up instead of down, he was told, “Insurance rates are rising across Ontario.”

It is now six months since you assumed power, and drivers across Ontario continue to get the double-digit increases. I ask you again: According to McGuinty math, how does a promise of a 20% rate reduction become a 20% increase for people?

Hon Mr Sorbara: My friend the leader of the NDP is right. We promised to freeze rates as soon as we came to power. We froze rates as soon as we came to power, on the first day. We promised to take measures to reduce those rates by, on average, 10%. As of April 15, rates are coming down by, on average, 10%.

Co-operators insurance company: exactly a 10% rate reduction. ING Canada: a 12.4% rate reduction. Pilot Insurance Co: a 10.2% rate reduction. Allstate insurance: a 10.9% rate reduction.

I simply want to tell you that my friend does not have credibility on this issue. We said we would do something. We did, and drivers in Ontario begin, as of this month, to benefit from lower rates.

CLASS SIZE

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): In the absence of the Minister of Education, I put my question to the Acting Premier. It's my understanding that directors of education and school board trustees today are the latest group of stakeholders who have been broadsided by his government. Interestingly enough, the Premier, who is well known for breaking promises, chose today a character communities conference to make an announcement. The announcement he's making is with regard to capping classroom sizes for JK to grade 3. We find it interesting that an announcement that obviously the government considers so important was not made in the House today. For a government that considers it important that this place be the site of important announcements, I find that interesting.

But here's my question: Why did the Minister of Education and the Premier today fail to announce any financial commitment? What they have failed to tell the people of the province is that they're so desperate to make this announcement, they're willing to impose split classes and impose literally thousands of portables on our school system in the province of Ontario. The question that parents should rightfully be asking is, how can this government justify doing something like this to the education system in this province?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): The Premier and the Minister of Education are in a school community today. They're there because they want to be a visible presence, not only to that school community but to the people of Ontario, to demonstrate that they care what happens in our schools, and that they will work with the education community, the teachers and the parents to provide them with the tools they know

are necessary for good education in the province. We are going to reduce class sizes in the primary division. That's the change the people of Ontario voted for, and that's the change that's being delivered in schools today.

Mr Klees: We know full well that the reason for this announcement today has nothing to do with the quality of education and everything to do with the desperate need of this government to spin some information to people in this province. That's what it's all about. They didn't have the decency to make an announcement in the Legislature today. What it's all about is politics.

What the people of this province want to know is where the billion and a half dollars is going to come from that the Ministry of Education estimated this is going to cost. What is going to be sacrificed by this government to fund the billion and a half dollars? Is it going to be health? Is it going to be transportation? Is it going to be the environment? Where is the money, the billion and a half dollars for this program, coming from?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: Only a member of the Tory opposition would open a question with, “How dare you lower class size?”

That demonstrates our commitment to improving the quality of education in Ontario. I'm very happy to explain that in addition to our commitment to lower class size—and when you speak with teachers in the primary division, they wholeheartedly support this initiative—we are also going to be placing lead teachers specially trained in literacy and numeracy in our schools. We are going to establish a platform for performance to establish peace and stability in our schools, something you decimated, something you totally destroyed in our schools.

We are advocates of better education. The Premier has indicated that that will be our strength as an economy going forward, and today is a first step to building that strong economy.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. It's about transportation issues in my riding of Oakville.

My first question is about public transit. We have many people who rely on public transit to commute to work and also people who use transit to come into Oakville. It's important to my community that we provide them with a modern and reliable system to get to and from Oakville. Minister, can you tell them about your plans and your recent announcement about public transit in Oakville?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I am pleased to inform my colleague from Oakville that this week we made some announcements on behalf of GO Transit to upgrade the Bronte station and also to refurbish 12 buses. This money will go toward renovations in the station and the repair of buses in the fleet. Construction will start in May and finish in December. We are absolutely committed to making transit our top priority.

Mr Flynn: My second question deals with transportation in my riding as well. Around the corner from the Bronte GO station is a new interchange at QEW and Third Line. Yesterday, the member from Oak Ridges made some statements about this project and its timing. Was he correct in those statements?

Hon Mr Takhar: Let me say that I think the member from Oak Ridges is looking for media attention. I want to assure the member from Oakville that the allegations he made yesterday were not really right or true. There have been no orders to slow our hard work on this project, or on any of our hard work across this province. This contract was awarded in 2002. In spring 2003 some minor changes were made in this contract. There is a dispute, which normally happens with these contracts, between the contractor and the government. We are working toward resolving it. We are absolutely committed to completing this project in 2005.

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RENT BANK PROGRAMS

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): In the absence of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, with responsibility for seniors, I'd like to direct my question to the Minister of Finance. Your government three weeks ago announced the provincial rent bank program and its expansion, yet you did so without announcing any clear guidelines or giving any assurances to municipalities about the quantum of the administrative costs in order to implement this program.

We have received correspondence from the first of many municipalities, Kingston in particular, the home riding of the Minister of Municipal Affairs. They raise a serious question about why your government would be announcing a program without clear guidelines and without assurances that—as they put in their resolution, they're not prepared to proceed unless the province of Ontario is also willing to assume all direct and indirect costs that municipalities will incur as a result of these programs.

Municipalities are allowed to make up their own guidelines and determine whether or not they would like to participate. I have a constituent of mine, a single parent with three children, who has been given an eviction notice and been told they're not eligible for the program. Will you advise on the admin costs, and will you give the municipalities assurances that you will pay the admin costs and that you'll have proper guidelines in place?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I should tell my friend that we're quite proud of that program. We think it will give assistance to those in the province who are most vulnerable. It's timely assistance. Just to clarify, the rent bank makes available to individuals who are experiencing temporary difficulty the ability to draw on the rent bank, to use that to keep current with the rent.

My friend mentions the participation of municipalities and the rules associated with the rent bank. They will be

coming forth shortly. I should say to him that he ought not to go on too long about the plight of municipalities. The work that their administration did on municipalities, the transformation of funding and the amount of down-loading on municipalities was a history of eight and a half years of taking expenses and putting it on municipalities, many of which could not afford to bear those expenses. I just want to tell him that the guidelines will be out shortly and we'll deal with the municipal issue.

Mr Jackson: The minister didn't listen to my question. I raised the question on behalf of a citizen of Ontario who has several months in arrears. The sheriff is visiting their door and throwing the children out on the street, not the municipality. My question is about the individual being thrown out on the street under your program.

The same is true of your hydro rate relief program. It has come to my attention that municipalities are now taking advantage of the fact that with the rate relief program they can increase the surcharges for tenants in social housing, which is owned by the very municipalities themselves, and increase those costs for air-conditioning and laundry facilities. They then can take the money from this limited \$2-million program, which works out to \$2 per person under the poverty line in our province, and pay off those bills.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Question.

Mr Jackson: I have a case of a constituent, Carl Lutz, who called me yesterday, concerned when he heard Dalton McGuinty say, "You know, you should try and live without your air-conditioning." He advises me that with his severe emphysema, he will die unless he has full air-conditioning and air-filtering systems, yet you're going to give him a 28% increase in his hydro bill. How is your program helping these people?

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Jackson: When will your guidelines for municipalities so that they can help the most needy—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister of Finance.

Hon Mr Sorbara: When I hear any member of that party talking about help for the most needy, my blood boils. Let's talk about Ontario's most vulnerable. Let's talk about people who need the Ontario disabilities support program to feed themselves and pay their rent. Let's talk about the fact that there has not been an increase in that program in 10 years. Let's talk about people on social assistance. Let's talk about the fact that there has not been an increase in that program throughout the entire eight and a half years that they were in power.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Let's talk about some order. Can you just wrap it up in 10 seconds?

Interjection.

The Speaker: I just asked for some order and the member from Burlington was shouting as soon as I sat down.

Hon Mr Sorbara: I understand the concern of my friend from Burlington. He has always been an advocate

for the most needy. I want to tell him that we are proud of the program we put forward over the course of the past six months. I want to tell him that when he sits in this House and listens to the budget, he will hear for the first time a budget directed in substantial measure toward those most vulnerable in this province.

HERITAGE PROGRAMS

PROTECTION DU PATRIMOINE

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Culture. Madam Minister, recently I received a publication from the Ontario Heritage Foundation, the Doors Open Ontario 2004 guide. The Doors Open program allows Ontarians to tour stunning heritage sites across the province that may not necessarily be open to the public, all free of charge. The guide provides heritage site information, including a two-page outline of historic sites in my riding, giving information on a calendar of events, travel information and the top 10 touring tips. I believe this program is of utmost importance to Ontarians who want to understand their history, and also for the heritage sites that so wish to receive much-needed publicity. As the guardian of Ontario's culture and heritage, can you tell me what other programs this government is supporting to protect our heritage and promote the heritage industry?

Hon Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs): First, I want to thank my colleague from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. I am very pleased to tell this House today what our government is doing to protect and promote heritage in this province. Doors Open Ontario is the first province-wide initiative of its kind in Canada. It launches its third successful season this Saturday, and the doors will remain open until October. This is an innovative program with a proven track record, but, more importantly, it also encourages us to take pride in our heritage and recognize the significant contribution it makes to our quality of life in Ontario.

Let me tell you about some of the many other initiatives we are undertaking through the Ontario Heritage Foundation to preserve and promote heritage. The Ontario Heritage Foundation continues to unveil provincial heritage plaques. There are more than 1,200 of them. It is the Ontario Heritage Foundation's oldest and best-known program. The foundation owns 22 built heritage sites and over 130 natural heritage sites.

Mr Brownell: Minister, I applaud your commitment to Ontario's heritage. I have been a strong promoter of heritage and history in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. I believe we cannot understand our future unless we know our past. Programs such as Doors Open Ontario allow many Ontarians the opportunity to come into contact with sites they may not necessarily experience.

Minister, yesterday in this House you announced new amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act. These amend-

ments finally update the existing act, which has not been changed since 1975. Can you elaborate on how these amendments will aid cultural institutions and programs such as Doors Open Ontario?

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L'hon. M^{me} Meilleur: Hier, nous avons présenté des modifications à la Loi sur le patrimoine de l'Ontario qui, si adoptées, changeront sensiblement la façon dont l'Ontario perçoit et protège son patrimoine.

Nous savions depuis longtemps qu'il fallait changer la loi existante parce qu'elle était inefficace. Des bâtiments et des lieux patrimoniaux uniques et irremplaçables disparaissent à un rythme alarmant sous les assauts des bulldozers et des boulets de démolition.

Le gouvernement McGuinty propose des modifications d'envergure à la Loi sur le patrimoine de l'Ontario dans le but de renforcer et d'améliorer la protection des biens patrimoniaux de la province.

If adopted, amendments to the Heritage Act will give municipalities in the province the tools to preserve existing heritage sites. If passed, our proposed revisions to the Ontario Heritage Act will significantly change the way Ontario views and protects its heritage. Ultimately, it's about safeguarding our heritage and the contribution it makes to strong communities and a better quality of life for all Ontarians.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. On April 5, I raised the case of Jordan Boufford of London, who turns six on May 5 and whose IBI treatment will be arbitrarily cut off. In response to my very specific questions about discrimination against this child, you said that Ron Scarfone, vice-president of the London chapter of the Autism Society of Ontario, endorses your plan and says it's absolutely the right thing to do.

In fact, Mr Scarfone said no such thing. He wrote to the Premier and said, "Penalizing families for advocating and discharging children because they turn six, are human rights violations and quite frankly, just morally wrong!" He wrote to the London Free Press and said, "Cutting children's IBI therapy off at age six regardless of their needs is simply wrong. I firmly believe that all children with autism should have access to IBI therapy based solely on their needs, not their age."

Minister, why did you misuse Ron Scarfone's name and position to try to justify your discrimination?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I'd like to clarify her misinterpretation of what I said. What Mr Scarfone said—and not to me; to the London Free Press—was that our plan was in the right direction. I at no time said that he agreed that after the age of six—

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): You left the impression.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: No, I did not. What I would like to say is what our government will do for these children with autism. We will support these children from preschool age right through to high school. We will actually double the funding for children with autism in this province. We will put \$10 million for the preschool program for IBI therapy, we will double the number of transition coordinators and we will spend \$30 million to train teachers and educational systems and parents in ABA/IBI in the classroom.

Ms Martel: I say to the minister, you should re-read the transcript, the Hansard. I asked two specific questions about discrimination. You used Mr Scarfone's name. That's what prompted his letter to the London Free Press, Minister. It was your answer in this House. You shouldn't have used his name in that way and you shouldn't be implying that experts support ending IBI after age six. Dr Adrienne Perry was seconded by the former government in 1998 to help set up the IBI program. She testified as an expert witness for your government at the Deskin-Weinberg court case. On December 9, 2003, she was asked, "So could you tell me what is the empirical basis for cutting off IBI on a child's sixth birthday?" She replied under oath, "I'd say there is not an empirical basis for that particular decision.... As I said in my report there's no very good evidence on that question, in general."

Minister, you don't have any experts with any evidence who support cutting off children after the age of six. Why don't you end the discrimination against these children just like you—

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: The only one who's misinterpreting what I said is the member opposite. Dr Adrienne Perry was standing right beside me in support of our autism strategy. Dr Peter Szatmari, child psychiatrist, world-renowned specialist, was right beside me when I was announcing our strategy. Dr Janice Tomlinson, superintendent of special education at one of our school boards, was right beside me that day.

And this from Shelley McCarthy from the Family Counselling Centre of Brant, unsolicited this morning in the Brant newspaper, said that this strategy, "will help bring kids off the waiting list and into the program. It will provide training"—

The Speaker: Order. New question.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. As you should be well aware, the auto sector is the largest employer in our great province. General Motors, as a matter of fact, is the largest employer in the region of Durham and receives in excess of a thousand trucks each and every day, let alone all the feeder plants that receive trucks as well.

These groups are very dependent on the infrastructure in the area. General Motors, as a matter of fact, is currently investing in excess of \$1 billion in a new paint

shop located on Stevenson Road in Oshawa. There was a full interchange taking place and moving forward on Stevenson Road with the 401. Others, including GO users and merchants were very dependent on the infrastructure and that interchange moving forward. We haven't heard too much about the Stevenson Road interchange lately. Can you inform us as to what's taking place with the Stevenson Road interchange?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): My understanding is that this interchange is moving ahead and it's scheduled to be completed in spring 2005.

Mr Ouellette: We're very appreciative of hearing about it moving forward. One of the other areas of concern which I'm sure the municipalities and the region are both concerned about is the capping issue on the expenditures on that. Can you ensure us here today that the capping agreement is going to remain in place for the Stevenson Road interchange?

Hon Mr Takhar: I am not aware of the capping arrangements, so I will check into that and get back to the member.

QUINTE HEALTH CARE CORP

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The Quinte Health Care Corp received over \$4 million as part of the package you announced in February to cover hospital deficits and increase base funding. As you may know, on April 1, Quinte Health Care Corp recently provided an increase in salary to its senior executives and managers in the 10% range. I am not pleased about your decision, and I've made my feelings well-known on this issue. I feel that this money should have gone to hiring more nurses and front-line staff because it's exactly what the hospitals there need. What message does it send when a hospital receives \$4 million to cover a deficit and uses part of that money to cover a 10% increase in salaries to senior managers and executives?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm pleased to answer my friend, who I know takes a keen interest in the operation of health care, as all members do, and has a strong involvement with the community hospitals in his riding. In a word, I'd say that the government is disappointed with the idea that a time of restraint provides any hospital in Ontario the opportunity to provide 10% increases to management. This is counter to the message of restraint. It's also counter to the priority that we have with respect to health human resources and hospitals.

We've made the point very, very clearly to hospitals, and I don't know how Quinte missed it: Nurses are a priority, with more of them on the front lines, more of them having full-time opportunities, and rebuilding the foundations of nursing, which I think everybody agrees is badly needed. With respect to the priorities that Quinte

Health Corp has undertaken, I'd say they need to be reviewed.

Mr Parsons: How can we ensure that future funding to hospitals will go to where it's intended to go rather than to enormous increases in the salaries of hospital executives?

Interjection.

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member for Erie-Lincoln likes to heckle from outside of his seat, but he doesn't like to live up to the reality that when his party was the government, they dedicated \$400 million to an initiative to enhance the percentage of nurses working full-time and achieved next to nothing for that. I think the message that this government has sent to health care partners all across the province makes an important point: that in exchange for the precious resources that we're able to dedicate, particularly to new initiatives, we're going to expect that they achieve the result that was intended.

I think the answer to the member's question is very clear: We're going to work increasingly hard to hold to account those transfer payment partners who receive precious resources, to make sure they go for what they are intended, and nurses certainly are our priority.

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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. When you were sworn in last fall, I congratulated you when you left the chamber. I also handed you your first letter as the Minister of the Environment, urging you to take action to deal with environmental matters on the four-laning of Highway 7 in eastern Ontario, near Ottawa.

As you know, the previous government committed \$85 million to this project. Area residents who travel this highway between Highway 417 and Carleton Place know how critical the four-laning work is to saving lives and improving traffic flow. Unfortunately, progress has stalled. A couple of requests for bump-up of the environmental assessment have been frozen in your ministry. These requests for bump-up are straightforward, yet your ministry has been sitting on them for over six months. The environmental assessment study took less time than for you to consider the bump-up request.

Minister, enough is enough. Can you confirm for me and my constituents today that you have dealt with these bump-up requests so construction can begin?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): Since the question has come from a former Minister of the Environment, I'm sure he's very aware of the comprehensive process that bump-up requests initiate. Staff at the Ministry of the Environment have significant documentation to consider, to consider the environment.

For this government, the environment is a priority. We are going to ensure, before any project is embarked upon,

that all the environmental concerns and issues have been taken into account before a final decision is made.

Mr Sterling: Minister, I might buy that if this was a new environmental assessment. I must remind you that the main environmental assessment, which was done five years ago, was approved. All we are now dealing with is an updated environmental assessment on minor design changes to the road.

I have raised this matter with both you and the Minister of Transportation, yet all my constituents can get out of your ministry is stalling.

Minister, more of my constituents will die along this heavily used stretch of highway without the four-laning. Again, you have had this file on your desk and in your ministry for over six months. This time span is longer than we are prepared to accept. I cannot and will not accept any longer delay. Lives hang in the balance, Madam Minister, and they are on your neck.

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: I have to say that I am very surprised with the tone that has been shared in this Legislature from a former Minister of the Environment and Minister of Transportation whose record in office, as both Minister of Transportation and Minister of the Environment, was less than stellar in terms of responding to correspondence. I placed before you projects in my riding for which I am still waiting for a response. I never even received them.

I told the member opposite the day he gave me the letter, as I left this Legislature—I committed to him that I would be as committed to the issues in his riding as he was to the issues in my riding when he was Minister of the Environment and when he was Minister of Transportation.

Mr Sterling: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Am I to take from this minister's answer that she is going to treat my constituents based on a personal relationship between me and her? I find that an abomination of a minister's responsibility to the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I don't regard that as a point of order. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I presume when I say "order"—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Don't presume when I say "order," it means talk on. When I say "order," I'd like to get some order in the House.

I don't regard that as a point of order.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): My question today is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. As a northern member, I'm very concerned about some of the content of the report of the panel on the role of government, chaired by Ron Daniels. The report recommends that we phase out regional economic development programs and look at retraining programs so we can move our people out of remote communities. The

report refers to some of our northern communities as "at risk." It goes on to suggest that our northern communities are unsustainable and that we should abandon all support.

I know that you are, as am I, very concerned about retaining our youth in our northern communities. We're very concerned about regional economic development. Do you agree with the statements in this report?

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I understand my northern colleague's concerns with the report. Rest assured, we're not going to turn our backs on northern communities. Our government believes that rural and northern communities are vibrant and rich in potential. One of this government's most important priorities is to work with other levels of governments, our partners and our stakeholders, to build strong communities, the kind of communities that we all want to see throughout this beautiful province.

Let me tell you, there is an abundance of potential in rural and northern Ontario. We have amazing natural resources. That creates amazing economic potential in both rural and northern communities.

Ms Smith: I appreciate your support for the north and for my community. We in Nipissing are working diligently to improve the infrastructure and the economic development of our community. The Friends of the Waterfront, in my community, have developed a vision for the development of North Bay's waterfront that is nothing less than inspired. Volunteers in my community have worked incredibly hard to raise over \$18 million for the building of our regional hospital.

Both of these initiatives have moved forward as partnerships between community volunteers, municipal government and provincial support. This report in no way reflects these exciting initiatives in our northern communities. What other actions will our government take to ensure the growth and sustainability of northern Ontario?

Hon Mr Bartolucci: First, let me say that I find it very interesting that this report comes from the former government, which saw more than 8,000 job losses in northern Ontario throughout their mandate. They tried to kill the northern economy, and then commissioned the report in an attempt to drive the final nail into the coffin.

Rest assured, we have taken immediate action to ensure the prosperity of rural and northern communities. This government committed in the throne speech to provide a direct link between the minister and northern communities, through the establishment of northern development councils.

One of the first issues that these councils will deal with is the youth out-migration problem we have in rural and northern Ontario. It's interesting that under the previous government, census figures indicate that there was a 24% net youth out-migration in northern Ontario. We will work to stop that. We want our youth to remain in and come back to northern Ontario.

1510

PLANT CLOSURE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. As you know, the Weyerhaeuser mill in Sturgeon Falls has been closed for over a year now. While you were in opposition, we in the New Democrats were very frustrated by the refusal of the Conservative government, which took no action in helping that struggling community to find a buyer and force Weyerhaeuser to the table so that the mill would not be sold but would stay open, and assist in saving those jobs. You're the government; you're the local member; you've been in power for six months; what have you done to save those jobs?

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): I'd like to thank the member, one of my northern colleagues, for the question. I have had several meetings with the officials of the municipality of West Nipissing, where Sturgeon Falls is located. We have been working together in trying to attract proponents to locate in that particular municipality, and looking specifically at value-added industry so that we can create those jobs and replace those jobs that were lost from that unfortunate closing of the Weyerhaeuser plant. I continue that work. I met with the CAO last Thursday evening and spoke to him about our progress on that, and we continue to work with the people in the community and the workers there. I spoke to the workers' rep on Thursday night also, and we'll continue to work on this project.

Mr Bisson: Minister, nobody disagrees that we ought to do some value-added work when it comes to finding jobs in northern Ontario, but that wasn't the question. The question was, while you were in opposition, my leader, Howard Hampton, myself, the local community and you were on the same side, and we said, "Let's force Weyerhaeuser to the table in order to sell that mill to somebody who's prepared to keep it open, to save the jobs at Weyerhaeuser." What I just heard you say is basically that you've given up. Are you prepared today to reverse the position you just stated in this House and work with us to find a buyer, to work with Weyerhaeuser to help them force the sale of that mill?

Hon Mr Ramsay: I think what the member needs to understand is that, unlike the leverage I would normally have with other forestry operations, where the crown controls the timber allocation, as you know, this particular plant did not have a timber allocation at all. It was basically a recycling facility for used cardboard, so there is not that leverage that we would normally have, where we can direct the development to certain communities.

As I said to the member before, I'm continuing to work with the community and various proponents who are interested in locating in that area, and we're going to continue that work.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I'd just like to say at this time that I believe I misspoke when I responded to the member opposite from Lanark-Carleton and said how his concerns would be treated. I want to indicate very clearly that I will do my very best and treat them better and deal with them better than they were treated when I was a member of the opposition.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): Mr Speaker, on the same point of order: This minister, on two occasions now, has withdrawn a water-taking permit from a company that employs over 300 people in the riding I represent. Her statement today indicates that this minister should no longer be the Minister of the Environment, that she should resign right now, because she is not exercising her judgment with the impartiality that she should.

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: I was sitting next to the member and heard very clearly the minister remark that—you should review Hansard, Mr Speaker, but it seemed to me the member remarked that she was going to treat this member's constituents differently than she would other constituents across the province.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I think the minister got up and explained herself. The member may not feel that was a full explanation. It seems to me there's a view of differences that is happening between both.

I don't regard yours as a follow-up on the point of order anyhow.

PETITIONS

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): This is yet an additional several hundred to the thousands of signatures that Joan Faria of Hamilton has been able to secure. It's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To immediately commit to action and funding to ensure the rights and protection for our senior citizens living in nursing homes and retirement homes in Ontario."

It has my signature of support.

TAXATION

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): We continue to receive these petitions. As a matter of fact, we received several hundred pages yesterday. It reads as follows:

"Whereas every day 1.5 million Ontarians, including seniors, health care workers and students, purchase a basic meal that costs less than \$4; and

"Whereas a new 8% tax on such meals will disadvantage low-income Ontarians; and

"Whereas adding a tax for the first time on a glass of milk, a salad, a bowl of soup or a cup of coffee will affect a total of 1.5 million Ontarians each and every day in restaurants and cafeterias across the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not impose a new 8% tax on basic meals under \$4."

I've signed my name in agreement.

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas every day 1.5 million Ontarians, including seniors, health care workers and students, purchase a basic meal that costs less than \$4; and

"Whereas a new 8% tax on such meals will disadvantage low-income Ontarians; and

"Whereas adding a tax for the first time on a glass of milk, a salad, a bowl of soup or a cup of coffee will affect a total of 1.5 million Ontarians each and every day in restaurants and cafeterias across the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not impose a new 8% tax on basic meals under \$4."

I've signed this petition and I agree with it. I want to thank Art Kovacs of Alliston for collecting so many names.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to read a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

"Whereas recreational trailers kept at parks and campgrounds in Ontario are being assessed by the Municipal Property Assessment Corp, MPAC, and are subject to property taxes; and

"Whereas owners of these trailers are seasonal and occasional residents who contribute to the local tourist economy, without requiring significant municipal services; and

"Whereas the added burden of this taxation will make it impossible for many families of modest income to afford their holiday sites at parks and campgrounds;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That these seasonal trailers not be subject to retroactive taxation for the year 2003; and that the tax not be imposed in 2004; and that no such tax be introduced without consultation with owners of the trailers and trailer parks, municipal governments, businesses, the tourism sector and other stakeholders."

I'm pleased to sign this in support of my constituents across Ontario.

TAXATION

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas every day 1.5 million Ontarians, including seniors, health care workers and students, purchase a basic meal that costs less than \$4; and

"Whereas a new 8% tax on such meals will disadvantage low-income Ontarians; and

"Whereas adding a tax for the first time on a glass of milk, a salad, a bowl of soup or a cup of coffee will affect a total of 1.5 million Ontarians each and every day in restaurants and cafeterias across the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not impose a new 8% tax on basic meals under \$4."

That is signed by thousands from Welland and other parts of Niagara region. I've affixed my signature as well. I send it to you with a page, Joseph.

HIGHWAY 518

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition from the constituents of Parry Sound-Muskoka, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Highway 518 between Highway 69 and Highway 11 serves the residents of the communities of Haines Lake, Orrville, Bear Lake, Whitehall and Sprucedale; and

"Whereas Highway 518 is in a deplorable condition; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has previously assured local residents of its intention to upgrade and improve Highway 518;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We request that the Ministry of Transportation immediately proceed with the reconstruction of Highway 518 between Highway 69 and Highway 11."

I support this petition and sign my name to it.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I have a petition slightly adjusted from one the government members bring forward. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the parliamentary tradition in Ontario of presenting annual budgets in the House of the Legislative Assembly has existed for decades; and

"Whereas the previous Speaker of the Legislative Assembly criticized the actions of the Conservative Party and is now" a candidate "for the federal Liberal Party; and

"Whereas the budget should be beyond reproach and should not be presented by a member of the executive council who has any perceived or real conflict;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure the budget is not read by a finance minister that is under investigation by the Ontario Securities Commission, the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or any other law enforcement agency."

I affix my signature.

1520

TAXATION

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas every day, 1.5 million Ontarians, including seniors, health care workers and students, purchase a basic meal that costs less than \$4; and

"Whereas a new 8% tax on such meals will disadvantage low-income Ontarians; and

"Whereas adding a tax for the first time on a glass of milk, a salad, a bowl of soup or a cup of coffee will affect a total of 1.5 million Ontarians each and every day in restaurants and cafeterias across the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not impose a new 8% tax on basic meals under \$4."

It's signed by hundreds of my constituents. I obviously support this petition as well.

TILLSONBURG DISTRICT
MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition signed by well over 2,000 of constituents from my riding and around my riding.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital has asked for ministerial consent to make capital changes to its facility to accommodate the placement of a satellite dialysis unit; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has already given approval for the unit and committed operational dollars to it; and

"Whereas the community has already raised the funds for the equipment needed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care give his final approval of the capital request change from the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital immediately, so those who are in need of these life-sustaining dialysis services can receive them locally, thereby enjoying a better quality of life without further delay."

I affix my signature to it and ask Jessica to bring it to the table.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government has said in their election platform that they were committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors and are now considering delisting drugs and imposing user fees on seniors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To halt the consideration of imposing an income test, delisting drugs for coverage under the Ontario drug benefit plan or putting in place user fees for seniors, and to maintain the present Ontario drug benefit plan for seniors to cover medications."

I have signed that, as I agree with the petition.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the parliamentary tradition in Ontario of presenting annual budgets in the House of the Legislative Assembly has existed for decades; and

"Whereas the previous Speaker of the Legislative Assembly criticized the actions of the Conservative Party and is now running for the federal Liberal Party; and

"Whereas the budget should be beyond reproach and should not be presented by a member of the executive council who has any perceived or real conflict;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure the budget is not read by a finance minister that is under investigation by the Ontario Securities Commission, the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or any other law enforcement agency."

I'd be pleased to sign my name to that too.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): We're now up to over 5,000 signatures from my area of Halton alone.

This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government was elected after promising in their election platform that they were committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors but are now considering delisting drugs and imposing user fees on seniors; and

"Whereas prescription drugs are not covered under the Canada Health Act unless dispensed in a hospital; and

"Whereas the federal Liberal government refuses to acknowledge this as a necessary health service despite the Romanow report's strong support for a national drug program;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To immediately and unequivocally commit to end plans for the delisting of drugs for coverage under the Ontario drug benefit program; and

"To immediately commit to ending plans to implement higher user fees for seniors and to improve the Ontario drug benefit plan so they can obtain necessary medications; and

"To instruct Premier Dalton McGuinty to demand more health care funding from Ottawa instead of demanding more funding and user fees from seniors."

This has my signature in support as well.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to be able to present a petition in sequence today at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my constituents of the riding of Durham.

"Whereas in Ontario, adult adoptees are denied a right available to all non-adoptees; that is, the unrestricted right to identifying information concerning their family of origin;

"Whereas Canada has ratified standards of civil and human rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;

"Whereas these rights are denied to persons affected by the secrecy provisions in the adoption sections of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas research in other jurisdictions has demonstrated that disclosure does not cause harm, that access to such information is beneficial to adult adoptees, adoptive parents and birth parents, and that birth parents rarely requested or were promised anonymity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact revisions to the Child and Family Services Act and to other acts to:

"Permit adult adoptees unrestricted access to full personal identifying birth information;

"Permit birth parents, grandparents and siblings access to the adopted person's amended birth certificate when the adopted person reaches age 18;

"Permit adoptive parents unrestricted access to identifying birth information of their minor children;

"Allow adopted persons and birth relatives to file a contact veto restricting contact by the searching party;

"Replace mandatory reunion counselling with optional counselling."

I'm pleased to sign this on behalf of my constituent Julie Jordan and others working for this important initiative.

LANDFILL

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

It is signed by several hundred people from my riding and, in particular, the riding of Garfield Dunlop, because this proposed dump is right on the borderline between our two ridings. I want to congratulate Mr Dunlop for his efforts in this regard.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of seniors from the riding of Erie-Lincoln, these from Stevensville. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas during the election campaign the Dalton McGuinty Liberals said they would improve the Ontario drug benefit program but are now considering delisting drugs and imposing higher user fees; and

"Whereas the Liberal government has increased costs to seniors by taking away the seniors' property tax rebate and increased the price of hydro;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should keep their campaign promise to improve the Ontario drug benefit program and abandon their plan to delist drugs or increase seniors' drug fees."

Beneath those of Edith and Robert Brown, I affix my signature in support.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm very pleased today, on Earth Day, to present this to Minister Dombrowsky.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I am very pleased to sign my name to this on Earth Day.

1530

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Pursuant to standing order 55, I rise to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week: Monday, April 26, 2004, Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising; Tuesday, April 27, Bill 56, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family medical leave and other matters; Wednesday, April 28, Bill 49, An Act to prevent the disposal of waste at the Adams Mine site and to amend the Environmental Protection Act in respect of the

disposal of waste in lakes; and Thursday, April 29, Bill 56 once again, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family medical leave and other matters.

ADAMS MINE LAKE ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004

SUR LE LAC DE LA MINE ADAMS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 20, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 49, An Act to prevent the disposal of waste at the Adams Mine site and to amend the Environmental Protection Act in respect of the disposal of waste in lakes / Projet de loi 49, Loi visant à empêcher l'élimination de déchets à la mine Adams et à modifier la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement en ce qui concerne l'élimination de déchets dans des lacs.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I think the debate was with the member for Haldimand-Norfolk Brant.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I would like to pick up where I left off last Tuesday and continue today, on Earth Day, to challenge the so-called Adams Mine Lake Act, also known as the No Landfills in Liberal Ridings Act. As I explained on Tuesday, while this government fiddles with redefining open pit mines and iron ore mines as lakes—I assume they're redefining and labelling gravel pits, sand pits, quarries and irrigation ponds of a particular size as lakes, and who knows what precedent this sets across Ontario—a very real crisis is threatening to hit this province from the Michigan border with the impact of 125 tractor-trailer loads of Toronto garbage. You will recall I outlined that battle lines are being drawn by southwestern Ontario mayors, elected Michigan officials at both the state and federal levels and even the Democratic presidential candidate, John Kerry, who says, "We shouldn't import trash from other countries."

We know that presidential candidate Kerry is backed by the Kennedy family, and I know the provincial Liberals across the way make reference to that family on occasion. John Kerry further promises, if he becomes President, "To review this issue in the first 120 days" of his presidency—120 days. That's hardly close to the 15 years it took to discuss, analyze and come up with the most recent government decision to close the Adams mine—120 days, from a possible future President of the United States. We have to be ready with a plan today, should Toronto's million-plus tonnes of trash be turned back at the Michigan border tomorrow.

I ask a question I've asked before, that many nervous people in Ontario are beginning to ask themselves and that they're beginning to ask their municipal councillors and their MPPs: Where would that garbage go? What municipalities would have to bear the brunt of Toronto's trash trucks? It does have to go somewhere, and yet this government seems content to close down any viable options that may be out there. This act is shutting down 15 years of debate, 15 years of due diligence, and this act

is closing down one of the few options left. We've heard that Keele Valley will not be reopened.

As I mentioned on Tuesday, we realize that the Liberal method of governing with respect to environmental issues is government by NIMBYism—not in my backyard—as was mentioned just a minute ago. Governing by NIMBYism essentially rules out 71 ridings from possible landfill, including any proposed expansion of landfill in the Minister of the Environment's backyard, so just where is this stuff going to go? Rural Ontario, northern Ontario, continue to be nervous. We have asked the minister this exact question four separate times, and I will repeat: Where is your plan? Where will Toronto's trash go? Each time, the minister makes it clear that this government has absolutely no plan; there's no plan for Toronto's trash.

I will say that they have a 60% waste diversion commitment, but even that is a moving target. When this commitment was first announced in this Legislature last December, the waste diversion target of 60% was to be reached in the year 2005. Please check Hansard. Now we are told the diversion target has been moved back three years, to 2008. What's next, 2010?

At the same time, I would mention that there are a number of municipalities that are rolling up their sleeves. They are willing to tackle this work toward high diversion. I had a chance to attend a symposium yesterday by the Municipal Waste Integration Network in Peel. I was honoured to speak on the future direction of waste management. It was attended by public works officials, elected representatives from Waterloo, the Hamilton area, Peel, of course. There were no Liberal MPPs on hand, I might mention. Yesterday, we took a look at a large number of innovative techniques and programs from other communities that are doing what they can to divert waste from landfill. In particular, I'd like to congratulate the township of Southgate for programming that has led to average diversion rates of well over 50%.

I was equally impressed by the important work going on in Brampton's brand new—I think it's six months old—Noranda corporation recycling plant. We had a tour of the plant yesterday afternoon. It's a state-of-the-art recycling facility for electronics, cell phones, photocopiers, computers that have reached the end of their lifespan. It's a very interesting process and relatively simple. Workers manually dismantle them. They take out the toner packages, for example, they take out the lithium batteries by hand, and then the rest is sent through shredders, where metals are separated out. This is a business that Noranda knows. They know how to explore for metal. In this case, rather than going through the mining route, they are recycling electronics to recoup metal—steel, obviously, copper, aluminium—and plastics and various finds that you would find within cell phones and computers and photocopiers. All told, this facility can produce 12 million pounds of end product a year, so there's 12 million pounds of metal and plastic not going into landfill. Again, this type of effort must be

commended, and I encourage the minister to find the time to tour that Noranda site. It's really quite enlightening.

Unfortunately, the diversion rates recorded in the township of Southgate are far from province-wide. I would submit that it doesn't really matter how many communities meet the 60% target by 2008—it is now 2008, and if anyone's readings Hansard from last year, that target has been delayed and postponed. I continue to ask, where is the government's plan?

There's another very important issue that no doubt has raised the eyebrows of the legal community across the Dominion of Canada, and that's the one of property rights and legal rights. I do want to address what I consider the unprecedented retroactive power grab that this act represents—truly an affront to the legal rights of Ontario citizens. I suppose retroactivity isn't all that unprecedented. Ontario Liberals, for example, have already exposed parents of students who attend independent schools to a very similar backward-looking measure when the tax credit was clawed back. That decision was made late last year, retroactively. It was clawed right back to January 2003. Of course we already know that clawback will not even come close to the \$500 million that Liberals told voters during the election they would save by cancelling that tax credit. That's a whole other area of promise-breaking. We'll leave that as a debate for another day.

1540

As I was saying, through this Adams Mine Lake Act, the Minister of the Environment in my view has put the government above the law and robbed individuals of property rights in this province, has robbed people of their fundamental right of action. What kind of business would consider operating in a province where the government, at the stroke of a pen, can remove their fundamental right of action? For a government to sign away an individual's rights and perhaps cover it up, perhaps justify it by offering a modicum of compensation, is not a jurisdiction that much business around the world would be interested in.

I'd like to read you a portion of a news release that was sent out the day the legislation was introduced. This says it all:

"The legislation would void any approvals and permits related to the Adams Mine project"—I note they don't call it the Adams Mine Lake here—"issued by the Ministry of the Environment prior to the date the legislation comes into effect. The legislation would also nullify any applications for permits under consideration by the Ministry of the Environment as of the date the legislation comes into effect." Further on, I read: "Any related legal action against the crown that may exist on the date the legislation comes into effect would be extinguished by the legislation. The legislation would also prevent any further legal action being taken against the crown as a result of the legislation."

So the government of Ontario is now above the law. It raises the question: Is this the type of democratic renewal

the people of Ontario were promised during this recent election?

As I listened to the minister introduce this bill, it really made me wonder if she, as a minister of the crown, or anyone on that side of the House for that matter, believes landowners have rights. Do iron ore mine owners have rights? Do farmers have rights? Do property owners have rights? Do people have property rights in Ontario when government can come in and retroactively remove the legal rights of property owners?

To me, it speaks, as we know, to the lack of property rights in Ontario, rights we lost when Canada adopted the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I realize the Ministry of the Environment—we know this—always has had the power to take away water permits, for example. But I'm disturbed that the minister has now seen fit to have the power to take away land, to take away property, and to take away legal rights. Apparently, under what I consider a dictatorial approach, the minister not only has these powers, but she can wield them like a samurai sword, slicing through the basic democratic rights of Ontario citizens.

Members present, I pose the question: Where do we go from here? I feel the Ontario Legislative Assembly should consider the advantages of rail haul for non-hazardous solid waste, non-recyclable solid waste, to distant environmentally sound landfills. That's my proposal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Questions and comments?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I paid close attention to the comments of this member and I found them interesting.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: I'm going to have a chance to speak to the bill myself in around eight minutes' time, Mr McMeekin, and I'm looking forward to doing that. I'm looking forward to addressing these matters as they impact, I appreciate, not Toronto and the rail line—or highway is even more a tragedy—up to Adams mine, but, for instance, how smaller-town Ontario deals with this.

I am going to be asking for the leadoff to be set aside so that Ms Churley, who's our environmental critic, can do it. That means I'll only have 20 minutes. So, folks, here we are at a quarter to 4. We're going to be doing 10 minutes of questions and comments. That will take us to around five minutes to 4. Then I'll have 20 minutes.

If folks want to hear what small-town Ontario has to say about these kinds of things, as compared to people here in the big city of Toronto, I invite them to tune in. I realize that the competition is stiff. At around 4 o'clock we're competing with Jerry Springer, among other things. But, then again, there's stuff that goes on in here that tops Springer any day of the week. I'm looking forward to that, looking forward to hearing, in particular, what Ms Churley has to say to say to it.

Finally, the position of the Conservative Party is most interesting. I'm looking forward to more participation in the debate by them. I'm also looking forward to whom

they can come up with during committee hearings. I think that will be some interesting commentary.

Make no mistake about this: The bill purporting to be what it is, at the end of the day lawyers are going to make a fortune and judges are going to make case law. There's no two ways about it. This is problematic. I'm going to speak to that in 10 minutes' time.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): The member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant had some acronym fun at our expense the other day, referring to NIMBY, NIMTOO, LULU. I just want to report that we had an overnight contest in ADFA, to come up with some acronyms for the Tories. We came back with some good ones: BOO-BOO, LOCO, OHOH, OHNO and GOTTAGO.

Interjection.

Mr McMeekin: Well, I wish I had time.

But the best one, the winner was, ONTGETSIT: Ontario news, terrific government elected, tossing out slippery, irresponsible Tories. That was the winning entry. I go there, not because I necessarily want to, but because of the disrespect that was shown with the frequent reference to NIMBY, not in my backyard.

I don't know where everybody else is at on this, but I try to teach my kids that it all starts in their backyard. Everything from, "Clean up your own mess that you make," to "No, honey, the paint doesn't go in the water system, we don't dump toxins there," to "Don't pee in the pool," to "Be careful about the chemicals you use on your front lawn." Right? It all starts at home.

It occurs to me that on the issue of energy supply the government opposite practised a form of BANANA: build absolutely nothing anywhere near anyone ever. If the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant had spent a little more time at NIMBY, in his own backyard, giving serious attention to that, maybe we could expedite the closing down of the coal-burning plants there that are killing, according to the Ontario Medical Association, some 2,000 Ontarians every single year.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to make a few comments on Bill 49, and on our leadoff speaker, Mr Barrett.

I found the last comments by the member from Ancaster very, very interesting. He said that we were disrespectful. I've never seen so much disrespect in my life as I've seen from the Minister of the Environment in this House today towards the citizens of Lanark-Carleton. That was awful.

I hope she's considering her resignation. What happened today is very, very serious. I can tell you that she should give serious consideration to how she treated the citizens of Lanark-Carleton.

I have a few comments on Bill 49 and what I call the pork-barrelling bill. I haven't seen pork-barrelling in the Liberals since the Paul Martin-Sheila Copps episode in Hamilton.

But if you are actually interested in protecting the environment, why would you pick one site—the Adams mine lake is what the minister calls it—why would you

take that site only, with all the other approved sites across the province that people have environmental concerns with? Why would you not look at any other site except that one? The reason is simple: It's because of Minister Ramsay. Minister Ramsay did not want the site at Kirkland Lake, so he announced earlier last year that he was planning on resigning if the site was approved. So that's what you call democratic renewal over there: Cancel a proposal, don't look at any other proposals across the province, and introduce a bill.

Now you've still got the same problems. All the other landfill sites that are approved in this province need to be reviewed because of the Walkerton inquiry. And the minister is not doing it. That's plain and simple. Instead, she's insulting the people of Lanark-Carleton with the type of nonsense we've seen here today.

So I look for a lot of comment on this. I look for a lot of opportunity myself to speak on site 41, another mistake by the Minister of the Environment.

1550

The Acting Speaker: Response from the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant.

Mr Barrett: I appreciated the comments from the member for Niagara Centre. I look forward to his reasoned arguments. Perhaps we will get a bit of history. I was not in the Legislature in the early 90s, but I know at the end of the Liberal era, environmentalists were very disappointed in the environmental record of the Liberal government of that day.

The member opposite made reference to acronyms. I wish I knew the acronym for your riding. I don't have time to name all the various municipalities. We did raise the oft-used term NIMBY. Those of us who have been involved in the environmental movement have been using that expression for years, going back to the 1980s. I do use that term with respect. Where I come from, when people make reference to another group, you do it in a very polite, respectful way or oftentimes you end up on your back on the floor if you don't. That's the way it works where I come from.

I don't need to explain what NIMBY stands for—not in my backyard—as reflected by the constituencies represented by both the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of the Environment. The other reference across the way was NIMTOO. That refers to "not in my term of office." A NIMTOO is a political NIMBY. The member from Simcoe North made mention of our Minister of Natural Resources. The story has it that he threatened to resign if this went into his constituency. I make reference to the Richmond landfill site, which was being stalled by the Minister of the Environment. Again, two examples of NIMTOOs, not in my term of office. Clearly, they've reached the definition of a political NIMBY.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. I'm seeking unanimous consent to defer the leadoff so Ms Churley

can attend and speak for the modest 30 minutes allowed the third party.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Kormos: New Democrats are going to support the bill, make no mistake about it. Having said that, I want to explain why I was a little bit late yesterday at the commencement of the House at 1:30. I had gone back down to Welland and was at Confederation high school, a French-language high school in the city of Welland with students from grades 7 through to the final year of high school, grade 12 now. It's been a tremendously successful experiment, putting grades 7 and 8 young people in together with high school people.

They were having their assembly in preparation for the May 5 Walk Against Male Violence. Other high school students are doing it in Welland as, I'm sure, across Ontario. I had a chance to participate in their assembly, to speak to them briefly and, amongst other things, congratulate those students at Confederation high school, the student body, the faculty and all of the staff—not just the teaching staff, but all of the staff—at that school for their tremendous commitment to this incredibly important issue.

I just wanted to explain why I was a few minutes late yesterday and wasn't here quite at 1:30. I didn't get in until maybe five minutes into members' statements. I'm just so exceptionally proud of those students at Confederation high school. I wished them well yesterday for their march as they marched with other young people, women and men, in Welland, joining and acting in solidarity with young people across the province, as they committed themselves to saying no to male violence, raising money for support of women in Afghanistan and raising money for local centres of refuge for beaten and battered women.

The Adams mine: I've been here in the Legislature long enough to have been here at the genesis of the debate. It's interesting that we may well see some finality to the debate. I've read the legislation carefully. I don't begin to suggest—and the Attorney General's here and he may want to stand up and speak to the likelihood of there being no litigation around the formula in here for damages. You read that, didn't you, Speaker? Because I know you've got some legal background. It looks so slick, so neat and so wrapped up with a bow, but you can bet your boots that it's an ABC sort of formula—where are we here?—"A+B-C" as a determination of—what do they call it in legal circles? The quantum, is that what they call it? The quantum of damages to be paid to the numbered corporation: "shall pay compensation ... in the following amount:

"A+B-C."

Then of course they define A, B and C. It just looks so neat and clean. I presume it's attempting to, at the very least, leave the impression, or attempting to pursue the goal, of it being as neat and clean come courtroom time. I suspect not.

The Attorney General has a whole lot of smart lawyers; he does. He's got high-priced lawyers over there on Bay Street, but the corporate entities that are going to be

suing the butt off the government when all is said and done have got high-priced lawyers too. My money's on the Attorney General because I think, if push came to shove, the Attorney General himself could go to court and, with one arm tied behind his back, with all of his law books glued shut, he could clean up on all those high-priced Bay Street lawyers without even working up a sweat.

I know that previous Attorneys General have tried that. I remember one. He'll remember, too, a previous Attorney General tried going to the Supreme Court of Canada. He was going to make a name for himself. He made a name for himself, all right, because if you'll recall the press reportage of that, it was to the effect of—Mr Attorney General, what's that old adage?—"A person who is his own counsel has a fool for a client." But the former Attorney General all on his own was going to go to the Supreme Court of Canada and clean up. The press reportage was sad. But he's making a comeback, I'm told. I'm told he's seeking the leadership of the Conservative Party, and we'll see what happens.

But in any event, there's going to be litigation and it perhaps, hopefully, puts an end to the—one of the other observations is there's big, big money in garbage. It's no accident that Tony Soprano is in, amongst other things, the waste management business. There's big money in garbage.

Down where I come from, in a border area, we are all the more sensitive because of the potential for the lakes and the Niagara River, along with other watered areas, as being dumping grounds for waste. We've seen the toxicity of the waste that's been pumped into the Niagara River—primarily from the American side, but Canadians aren't blameless in this regard—and the impact on the Niagara River and Lake Ontario and, as well, the impact from border communities—and again, Ontario isn't blameless in this regard—on Lake Erie.

But down where I live, down in Welland, we're a community that's part of the regional municipality of Niagara. Let me talk to you a bit about the smaller town perspective. A crisis erupted prior to the election date of October 2—quite frankly, during the provincial election campaign—over our landfill site down at the end of Feeder Road. Feeder Road is called "Feeder Road" because it runs alongside the Feeder Canal which, of course, fed the Welland Canal with water from out Dunnville way, past Dunnville—Port Rowan, if I remember correctly—where they brought in water from Lake Erie to feed the Feeder Canal. Mr McMeekin might be familiar with that grand history. It was a conduit, a way of carrying traffic.

1600

The Feeder Road dump had reached capacity. Among other things, what happened was we underwent regionalization of our landfill sites down in the regional municipality of Niagara. Then you had a regional council, where you had large cities like St Catharines, with many representatives, choosing, to the dismay of folks, let's say, in Welland, that the Welland landfill site was going

to become the destination of the garbage from their communities as well. Do you understand what I'm saying? Wrapped up in the argument and justification for regional government, it looked like just another sound regional decision, but what it did was basically tell St Catharines, let's say, "It's OK, because you can just use the Welland landfill site."

As a matter of fact, applications were being made to extend the height of the Welland landfill site. That's an old landfill site and, I've got to tell you, people down in the St George Park area were nervous. People were afraid that the leachate from that site was impacting, amongst other things, on the very old swimming pool in St George Park, where kids for generations have been going to do summertime swimming. People were concerned that the drainage ditches, the waterways around that Welland Feeder Road landfill site, were carrying runoff from that landfill site. In fact, the best of efforts on the part of the region still didn't prevent the occasional backup and crisis when there was inappropriate leakage—and some significant leakage—from time to time. This was documented during a number of public hearings.

Where I'm getting to, Mr Speaker—and I appreciate that it's late in the afternoon and you've been working hard all day. You've been here in the chamber since 10 am this morning, and I admire that. You show a fortitude that men half your age are hard pressed to demonstrate. I say to you, Speaker, that for a person your age, you're pretty impressive in your ability to work a full eight-hour, 10-hour, 12-hour day, I suspect, from time to time.

What concerned me was that none of the discussion, none of the debate, around the Welland landfill site addressed the issues of the reduction of the amount of waste, the classic approaches to solid waste around issues of recycling and reusing.

One of the problems small-town Ontario has is that our blue box—and now we have grey boxes. Grey boxes have replaced blue boxes, because the blue boxes are for non-paper. And we've just begun a compost program. So we have blue boxes and grey boxes. Those are expensive and the fact is that they operate at a net loss to communities. They are expensive to run. They operate at a net loss in terms of the here and now; certainly not at a net loss in terms of running out of capacity for putting this stuff in landfill sites.

I appreciate the goal and the intent of Bill 49 and I think my caucus colleagues do too, but what I have greater concern about is the failure of our government, of this province, to lead the way in aggressive waste reduction, recycling and reuse programs, amongst other things. We need, finally, really aggressive campaigns around glass, tin and plastics, and small-town Ontario needs the resources to enable them to do it.

One of the things that regional Niagara has had to do is reduce the number of blue box pickups to once every two weeks as compared to once a week. I have great pride in my neighbours and in the people who live in the communities I represent, because they're pretty enthusiastic blue-boxers and now grey-boxers. But at the end of

the day, when they only come around once every other week compared to once a week, the commitment to the program can become challenged, and the utilization of green garbage bags can become an attractive alternative to coping with numerous and full blue boxes—or now grey boxes—sitting outside your back door or on the back porch or in the garage, wherever they might be.

The fact is that if we want to be really serious about blue box, grey box and composting programs, we've got to up the frequency of collection, and that means that we have to make the investments in doing that, and that means that the province has to be there. The province has to be prepared to help.

The other crisis that Welland has, along with other old industrial communities in Niagara, and quite frankly a whole lot of other parts of Ontario, is in the rehabilitation of brownfields. Welland, Port Colborne, Thorold, St Catharines, these old industrial communities—Pelham is probably very much the exception, although you'll find, I'm sure, some very small, modest amounts there. But you know, these communities—Maclean's magazine, around nine months ago now, carried a cover story of, I think, five communities across Canada that had made the municipal investments in brownfields with great success. Well, sure: Toronto, Winnipeg, inner city, big city, the high retail prices for property—in those cases, the city can afford to rehabilitate those brownfields because the value of land is high enough—the value of land in Toronto is extraordinary—that you can justify the cost, the expenditure.

Down in Welland, you can't do that. South of Welland, in Port Colborne—and I'm eagerly awaiting this government's action on the support and compensation and acknowledgement of the victims of the Inco nickel contamination in the city of Port Colborne. We're talking about family after family who have been displaced from their homes, who are suffering the ill effects of nickel contamination. We're seeing incidents of cancer that are running rampant.

Regrettably, the application for a class action was denied by the courts. The courts determined that there weren't the proper circumstances under which these folks could organize themselves as class action plaintiffs. They're depending upon a lawyer, most of whose time is being donated to the cause. They've been fighting not only Inco, but they've been fighting the government: They've been fighting the Ministry of the Environment.

I say to you that if indeed this government was about change and is to be about change, then this government should change its tune, or at least change the tune from that of the previous government to the people being poisoned by Inco's nickel dust and other toxic chemicals down in Port Colborne, particularly on the east side. I would, while pleased to see this bill pass, be more pleased, even more pleased, to see legislation passed that would clearly identify the rights of those victims of nickel contamination to compensation, to justice, to fairness. Frankly, many of them are frightened, and the facts speak for themselves, that they're going to be long

dead before there's any success in the courts. That's not to blame the lawyers or the court or the judges. Those are costly and time-consuming exercises.

So I speak to Bill 49 on behalf of communities that very much want to address the whole phenomenon of landfill, who understand that landfill is probably the last way that one or any community or member of any community wants to dispose of solid waste. But they need support. They need specific, clear programs.

One of the propositions that reared its head over the course of the 15, 16 years or so that I've been here is the participation of the LCBO in recycling programs. I can tell you that the workers at the LCBO are more than eager, more than pleased to create a recycling program. One commentator suggested that it was the lack of uniformity amongst bottlers of various spirits—especially from the point of view of, let's say, reusing, recycling, rather than simply crushing of bottles and using that glass and plastic waste to create new glass or plasticized glass, as in liquor containers.

The problem is that the cost of not doing it is greater, because the cost to communities—communities like Welland—and the consumption of capacity of landfill sites and the incredible—look, landfill sites down in communities like Welland are literally in people's backyards. One of the things that people in Welland found darkly funny, darkly humorous, is that the region responded by investing in a \$100,000 program to hire a firm to send out hawks to beat up on the seagulls who attend at the Welland landfill site, as if somehow that were a response or an answer to the concerns and the grievances of historic neighbours of that landfill site who have seen that landfill site increasingly encroach on their backyards—literally.

1610

I'm sorry, not in my backyard has some reality to it, and some reason to it, when the landfill site was way over there, when you built your house with the promise and the commitment that it was going to stay way over there, but then as it increased in size, it ends up being, well, literally in your backyard. The folks down in that end of town—I know them; it's down in Welland south. I mention St George Street amongst others; Broadway. These are hard-working folks, a whole lot of them immigrant families, people who've built their homes with their own hands, raised their kids, helped raise their grandkids. They built St George Park themselves. They're interested; they're eager; they're enthusiastic; they plead for a government that's going to give their community support in dealing with landfill. They appreciate that they don't have the drama of the Adams mine issue. They appreciate that they don't have all the dark and sinister wheeling and dealing that went on around Adams mine. They appreciate that the big money hasn't changed hands.

I would love to have been a historical fly on the wall in all the meetings, in all the dealings, in all the transactions that took place around Adams mine over about—almost two decades now, Mr Colle? We're talking almost 20 years? Look, Jacobek would look like

at piker—25 grand in the basement of city hall is nothing compared to the cash that I conjecture has changed hands over Adams mine and its utilization as a landfill site. I have no hesitation in saying that. Jacobek is talking chump change compared to the cash that one can reasonably conjecture has passed in suitcases, valises, briefcases, brown paper bags, manila envelopes, who knows what number of numbered bank accounts in offshore jurisdictions. That's why, as I say, Mr Soprano is in the waste business: because there's so much money.

Welland pales in comparison, but I tell you, there are a whole lot of Wellands out there and small-town Ontarios that need the same attention and same focus of the people who live in the area and rightly protest and object to the Adams mine site, the artificial lake that's been created there, being used as a dump for Toronto's or anybody else's garbage. The real solution is for this government to provide real leadership, with the right investments in the real reduction of waste, in really strong recycling programs for not just big-city but small-town Ontario too and in landfill relief for cities like Welland, along with real investments in brownfield rehabilitation and remediation.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I was listening intently to my colleague from Niagara Centre. He talked about the not-in-my-backyard concept.

This was quite an extension of that concept of not in my backyard. In fact, I think if people 50 years from now look back on this proposal and see that a city like Toronto was going to ship their waste into northern Ontario by rail and put it in some mine and then pawn this off as some kind of environmental project, I think they're going to laugh that this was even considered.

It just shows how desperate, I think, we are in some ways, in terms of dealing with our waste. We really don't have a plan, haven't had a plan. We're finally starting, I think, as a government, to come to grips with these schemes like this Adams mine scheme, which really was almost like a Ponzi scheme. That's what it was. In other words, there was nothing there and they got all this financial involvement and interest in it, and it became this solution to a waste diversion problem. It really made no sense—I mean, the emperor had no clothes—that we were going to ship garbage by rail up to northern Ontario.

I go back with this about 15 years. I remember when this first came by our desks at the city of Toronto, at Metro council, and the funny thing is that this thing was like Dracula: No matter how many times you tried to kill it, it came back. It came back because it was this Ponzi scheme that supposedly was going to make a lot of people very rich. Finally I can say I hope this thing is dead, that it will never rise again, that we put a silver bullet in it. Dracula is gone and dead and buried up in the Adams mine.

Mr Barrett: The member from Niagara Centre made reference to landfills in the Niagara region. We can learn from the past. In the 1970s there was tremendous concern with respect to industrial waste: industrial waste that

wasn't being treated properly in the first place and industrial waste that really had no home.

That was back in 1981, when the government of the day established the Ontario Waste Management Corp. They got ahead of themselves, in a sense, even before they were fully organized. They took a look at the Niagara region and at the Haldimand-Norfolk region. They made a premature decision. They decided either on the South Cayuga site at that time or to fast-track the South Cayuga site. Then, in their wisdom, they conducted some hydrogeological studies and discovered some shortcomings, and within a month or two the board of the waste management corporation voted unanimously to reject that South Cayuga site. So we can learn from some of this history.

However, as I recall, they continued to look in the Niagara region. There were two sites in West Lincoln that were being considered. There were two sites in Niagara Falls, which seems odd. I'm not sure how far it was from the Niagara River. I know South Cayuga was close enough to the mighty Grand and Lake Erie itself. They looked at two sites in Milton, and through their deliberations focused on one final site in West Lincoln. I'm not clear exactly where that landfill is, I know there is one in that area, but we can learn from this history.

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I listened intently to the member from Niagara Centre, who spoke to Welland and Welland South and small-town Ontario.

I have to tell you that Pickering, as part of my riding, used to be part of small-town Ontario. There's a major landfill site, now closed, called Brock West that was the predecessor to Keele Valley. Along the way, both sites were opened in the Brock West landfill site, not unlike what you would have in Welland or other small towns in Ontario. It sits on top of Duffins Creek and is probably the best cold-water fishery in the greater Toronto area. It's recognized nationally for that and feeds right down into Lake Ontario, within a kilometre or two.

That land site has all of the implications for small-town Ontario that many do throughout the province, particularly in light of the fact it was home to metro Toronto's garbage. The trucks rolled down the highway. At some point I hope to be able to speak more to the bill in its entirety. But the member from Niagara also spoke about some of the principles of reducing, reusing and recycling. We were caught up, I think, at times in the box, the blue box and the grey box. We've got to back ourselves up a step or two to the reduction factor.

I think about Christmas or about times of the year when you need a gift, and you go out and buy a new shirt. You take it home and open up the cardboard box with a nice cellophane front. You're going to recycle the cardboard box part, and the cellophane portion you can't, that doesn't recycle, but you get rid of the box anyway. Then you say, "I've got to open this thing up. It looks great. I've got to try it on." So you start to open up the shirt and you take the plastic clips out of the collar. Those go to one place. At this point, that's in the garb-

age. You can't recycle those. Then you get the cardboard piece under the back part of the collar. There's really no great spot, so you put it in your blue box. Then you've got all the pins, and you start pulling the pins out of it.

We really have to give thought to the backstream part. Let's start the reduction in the use, and then we can work our way forward.

1620

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Kormos: I listened to the member talk about how 50 years from now it'll seem incredulous that garbage was going to be railed, or even more tragically, trucked, to the Adams mine. I appreciate the sense in which you say that, but come down to Stevensville with me, where there's a huge warehouse of garbage that has been trucked from any number of destinations. It's a dispatch centre. It's a warehouse. You poke around in there like Arlo Guthrie, down in the dump in Stockbridge, looking for, leaving behind the evidence.

You'll find garbage of all sorts from southern Ontario that's being warehoused. It's being warehoused in an enclosed space so the neighbours don't get overly—the neighbours are very concerned about the growth of this warehouse, but garbage is—I appreciate what you're saying, but people had better be more vigilant than to think that merely shutting down the Adams mine project is going to end the appeal of shipping, trucking, railing—railroading—garbage. It's being shipped huge distances now. The matter is at the point of desperation.

We need aggressive, tough leadership coming out of Queen's Park. We need support for communities so that they can be brought along in the plan. Small-town Ontario can't do it on their own. They can't afford the cost. They've been beaten and battered for eight-and-a-half or nine years now.

Property taxpayers cannot bear any more burden on that flat, regressive tax. They've been exhausted. This province, this government, has got to be prepared to make the investments necessary to make it happen, rather than simply engage in the polite, trendy rhetoric that sounds good but achieves little if it's the rhetoric standing alone.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Etobicoke North.

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): Just before beginning, Speaker, I'd like to let you know that I would like to share my time with the honourable Kevin Flynn, the MPP from Oakville.

There are a number of aspects I'd like to share, but before I do, I'd like to commend the MPP from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant for actually supporting a good liberal Democrat, and that is Senator John Kerry. We welcome that support from the Tory caucus. We wish him well in that selection.

He also made reference to one of the world's most noted environmentalists, and that is Bobby Kennedy Jr, whose family of course has made noted contributions to the political structure of North America and beyond. To quote Bobby Kennedy, he said, with specific reference to the Adams mine project itself, "Putting garbage into the

Adams mine was a slow way of throwing it directly into Lake Ontario." Elsewhere he's written, "Environmental injury is deficit spending. It's passing the cost of our generation's prosperity and loading it on to the backs of our children." That is something that the McGuinty vision, the McGuinty government, the new McGuinty Ontario will not tolerate.

I'd also like commend, first of all, the MPP from Niagara Centre, Mr Peter Kormos, for his support of this bill. I'd also like for a moment to quote him. He said, "I would like to be historical." I'd like assure the MPP from Niagara Centre that in a relic sort of way he is already of historical, I might even say, archaeological interest, not unlike a well-preserved fossil from a bygone era. But we nevertheless welcome his support on this particular bill.

The other thing to mention is that the recently manufactured concern for the environment, the recently acquired concern by the Tory caucus is a little bit remarkable and modestly ironic. This, of course, from a caucus, from a government that in eight years, step by step, almost dismantled the Ministry of the Environment, lowered industrial standards, fired meat inspectors, fired water inspectors, and is really I think trying to retrofit their newly acquired concern for the environment. But I must say, it's almost like purchasing clothing that's just a little bit too large: It doesn't fit and doesn't wear very well.

In this bill, Bill 49, there are a number of issues that we're attempting to present. It's a matter of amending the Environmental Protection Act. It's a matter of intelligent waste management. It's a matter of bringing real and positive change to Ontario and displaying strong and enlightened leadership.

In particular, it's saying no to landfilled mines, which are essentially lakes in training, essentially mixing groundwater with garbage, leading to the toxic soup that the MPP from Niagara Centre so eloquently referred to. It's a matter of displaying environmental sensitivity and really protecting what is, after all, a sacred trust and a sacred asset, not to be toyed with lightly, certainly by the government of Ontario. It's a matter of protecting groundwater, which is a very precious resource. Ultimately, it's about protecting communities and protecting the people of Ontario and their quality of life.

Bill 49 will actually prevent the disposal of solid waste in the Adams mine site and extend that same protection to all potential landfill sites and lake sites in Ontario larger than one hectare in size. This is a very far-reaching strategy. Of course, the millions of tonnes of garbage produced municipally, industrially, commercially, institutionally, from construction, from demolition sites and so on is immense. So it is a very real—and clear and present—danger, if you will, that we must deal with. This is the first step in dealing with this type of waste management.

I'm pleased to say that our government, the Ontario provincial government, is moving forward in a federal partnership—that too is something new in the history of Ontario for the past decade or so—and we'll be seeking

to fundamentally entrench a new Environmental Bill of Rights, in particular prohibiting the disposal of waste not only in the Adams mine, but also amending the Environmental Protection Act to disallow the use of any lake over one hectare in size as a landfill site.

This is clear evidence of the delivery of real and positive change that will help to make Ontario strong, healthy and prosperous. How? By ultimately protecting and maintaining clean, safe, livable communities and really safeguarding the health and well-being of our citizenry.

This is a comprehensive plan for managing Ontario's waste, a plan that will focus on waste diversion, address these landfill issues and improve our overall waste management strategy. Ontarians have said to us clearly in our consultation processes that they want cleaner communities which will ultimately improve their quality of life. That's why we're acting on reducing this waste disposal, because, frankly, we are running out of landfill capacity.

One of the important messages that we are attempting to share and broadcast to Ontarians is that we have a very aggressive waste diversion target. Our goal is, in fact, to divert 60% of waste from landfill by the year 2008. Basically, to that end we'll be releasing very shortly a discussion paper that will actually bring forward options that will help to achieve this goal. Of course, this is not something that's just hatched in the ivory towers of the Queen's Park bureaucracy. This is something that we've gone to Ontarians on, consulted with them and found out what all the different stakeholders involved are thinking, whether it's from industry, from the mine site owners or, of course, in particular the northern communities who actually have to bear, perhaps, the real and ultimate cost of these types of initiatives. Why? Because we feel that it's important to consult with all stakeholders, especially those who are directly involved. In this manner, we are able to ensure that municipalities' waste diversion plans are sustainable and environmentally sound and that we have the very best plans for balancing community needs and environmental protection.

For this reason—the preventing of the disposal of waste in the Adams mine site, the far-reaching strategy for dealing with waste management on a province-wide scale—I'm honoured to support this bill.

1630

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It certainly is a pleasure to follow the member for Etobicoke North today as we speak to Bill 49. There couldn't be a better day to talk about it. Earth Day is a day in itself that brings issues such as this into focus and makes us think that we need to address these issues together, that they're not particular to any one political party or political philosophy. There are issues that need to be addressed. The future of our society is at stake if we don't address them.

It's always interesting, as a new member of provincial Parliament, to listen to some of the people who have graced these chambers for a good many years more than I have—some of the more experienced members, some of

the older members. It's interesting to hear about some of the things that may have taken place in the House before and how people like to rehash them. You hear things like, "In 1981 you said this to me, I remember that," or, "In 1989 you supported this," or, "You didn't support that." As entertaining as the viewing public and the media may find it, I suspect that what the people of Ontario, especially southern Ontario, want and need today is a solution to a problem that they're facing, a problem that is facing many communities today, and that is a problem with waste and how do we manage that waste?

This speaks to the Adams mine lake and landfill sites, but it's really about building a community, and when you think about what it takes to build a proper and solid, sustainable community, it really is common sense. For some reason, in the past—and all of us have been guilty of this, those at the local level, those at the provincial level and even those at the federal level—we haven't always applied that common sense to our community building.

When you look at some of the ingredients that you would want to see in a community, you know you want clean air. You know that the air within that area has to be of the quality that will sustain life, that it won't cause illness or increase asthma in our children. And, quite frankly, as we look back, we realize that some of those ingredients aren't there. All it takes for me is to take a drive in from Oakville to Toronto on a summer day. It simply is not clear. There's a haze hanging over the GTA that is simply unmistakable. I don't think you can blame it on any one particular environmental cause, but certainly we'd be foolhardy to ignore it. It stands out like a sore thumb, and it's probably the number one topic of conversation on the QEW and Gardiner Expressway: "What is that cloud over there and what is it doing to us?" We need to address issues such as that.

When you take a look at water quality, one of the things that sustains life in an urban setting as much as it does in a rural setting is clean drinking water. Look at some of the problems we've had in Lake Ontario. Take a look at the algae buildup. What is causing that? Where is that phosphorous coming from?

When you look at the population growth in our urban areas, it's very, very simple: People create waste and will always create waste. We're trying to minimize that waste. I think it's an environmentally responsible way to go. We simply need to get serious about it. We're still creating the waste and we're still allowing our communities to grow. The 905 area is booming. There's building all around the 905 area. These people, as they move into homes, expect garbage pickup, and that pickup is granted. What we don't have is a plan within our own communities that will allow for the proper management of that waste. We're pretending that waste doesn't exist, or pretending that somehow, if we put that waste in the truck, it will go somewhere else and somebody else will take care of it. That simply is not a sustainable way to approach things.

We're part of a global problem. I was talking to a gentleman the other day who had spent some time in China. He was telling me how China is beginning to deal with its waste problems. And when you take a look at urban Ontario, southern Ontario, the GTA, remember that we are the third- or fourth-largest urban area on the North American continent. First, of course, is New York, second is Los Angeles, and then, depending on who you talk to or maybe what month it is, either the GTA or Chicago comes in third, but I think what you can't ignore is that we are living in and are responsible for a major urban area in the world.

Look at the way the United Nations is addressing the problem. They're very concerned about how China is going to manage its waste problem. Quite frankly, there is a fear that they may go to low-tech incineration. When you think about the impact it has on the globe, you start to realize that we are part of a global problem that needs to be solved and that urban areas simply have to come to grips with their waste.

We need to address the problem, and I think we are starting to address it, by recommending the passage of this bill. It clarifies the situation, in my opinion. This is saying that if this bill is passed, the Adams mine landfill will simply become a bad memory. It will be something that some people proposed and that another government looked at and decided was not going to be a part of our future, that it was not a sustainable way to go, that it was not a sensible way to deal with our waste problems.

What we are going to do, and what we think this bill is proposing as a solution, is that a waste management strategy will be implemented. We need to look at this in a strategic manner, we need to look at it in an orderly manner and we need to look at it in a sensible manner that brings in the best advice that is available and the best technologies that are available.

What we hope to achieve by 2008 by the passage of this bill would be a 60% waste diversion. That's extremely aggressive, and I'll tell you why I know that's aggressive. I come from the riding of Oakville, as you know. It's part of the great region of Halton. About 15 years ago, we were in exactly the same position that the city of Toronto and other regions in the GTA find themselves in today. Our landfill site was nearing capacity. We kept producing the garbage and we needed someplace to put that garbage.

At that point in time, we went to the other municipalities and the other regions surrounding the GTA and said, "We're running into a bit of a problem here. We're seeking a solution. We think we're going to find a solution to the problem, but in the interim we would like to use a little bit of your landfill capacity. Once we solve our problem, we will allow you to have some of our capacity once we get the landfill site established." We didn't get any takers. I think we approached just about every region. We approached the city of Toronto, I know. We asked if we could use that capacity and it wasn't forthcoming.

It put us in a very difficult position as a community in that we had to face up to some very harsh realities, and in the interim, because we didn't have that problem solved, we were trucking our garbage to the Walker landfill site in Niagara. We were trucking it to Buffalo, I think it was to the Hooker Chemical plant, and it was being incinerated. Just yards across the border from Canada, we were having our own waste incinerated by a different country under different rules. We realized that wasn't the long-term solution to waste management in the region of Halton.

After an exhaustive process—I will tell you that we realized we were going to have to address this problem somewhere in the early 1970s—we finally got approval for a landfill site in Halton in the late 1980s. So it took anywhere from 15 to 20 years to get approval to build a landfill site. That simply does not work. That needs to be addressed, that needs to be changed, and we realize that. Eventually we were able to come to an agreement with all the communities within Halton on a landfill site. Today we have a landfill site that was originally going to give us about 20 years' capacity, but because of the waste diversion programs we have been able to implement in the interim, we have been able to move that to about a 47-year capacity.

When I look at the problems that are being experienced by the other regions, towns and cities within the GTA, I know exactly what they are going through and I think I know what it takes to solve that problem. But what the region of Halton would not like to see, of course, is its own landfill site being used as part of that problem.

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I'm very glad to see that we're going to implement a waste management strategy that will allow towns and cities to implement a waste diversion system that will provide a 60% diversion rate by 2008. That's going to have to include an organics program. Anybody who understands the landfill issue understands that you don't get 60% diversion without including something to do with organics.

This waste management strategy that we will implement as a result of this bill, should it pass, will set some province-wide diversion objectives, as I've said, of 60%. It will also set diversion targets for residential waste that could be achieved through improvements to municipal blue box programs and increased composting. It will accelerate and expand centralized composting in Ontario's largest municipalities. It will develop a financing strategy for centralized composting, including cost recovery mechanisms, municipal revenue generation, public-private partnerships, shared infrastructure agreements and provincial assistance in the form of either grants or loans. It will look at the feasibility of even phasing in a ban on organics and other recyclable materials in Ontario's landfill sites.

We need to get serious if we're going to achieve that 60%. We can't be putting compostable material or recyclable material in a landfill site that is to be used

simply for anything that can't be recycled. It just doesn't make sense and we can't afford to do it.

We also need to introduce new options that help residential homeowners and commercial operators to implement source separation. Industrial, commercial and institutional sectors could be part of the solution if they were able to separate at source.

We also need to consider new and emerging waste management technologies. That, if you look around the world, is an example of how other communities are dealing with their waste. People talk about Europe, how we need to look at the European experience, how they're dealing with their waste. We do need to look at it. It may not be for the province of Ontario or the GTA but, simply put, it's time to get serious about this.

I appreciate the work the Minister of the Environment has put into this bill. It's worthy of support. It's a first step on a long journey toward sustainable communities.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On a Thursday afternoon here it's a pleasure to respond to the government's statements on Bill 49. Just to remind viewers, I will be speaking in a few minutes. If they want to get their VCRs tuned up to record it, that's perfectly permissible.

I don't have anything particularly profound to say but I was somewhat surprised, when the member from Lanark-Carleton, a former Minister of the Environment, was asking a very respectful question to the Minister of the Environment, that her response was really to cut short the previous minister, Mr Sterling, in fact denying what I consider fair and objective representation for the people of Lanark-Carleton. I was quite surprised. He was Minister of the Environment.

In fact, the bill we are talking about—we need to always be accountable, and in this case I, in my remarks, will be making the point that it's very much in a position of judgment—not disrespect for the arguments being made on Bill 49 which are on the record and will be made part of my remarks, but the minister's record on this file is somewhat suspect, as was brought to our attention by the member from Lanark-Carleton earlier today during question period.

On the whole, no one on this or any side of the House would disagree that there is a serious challenge before us in terms of managing the waste that we all contribute to the province, whether individually, in our families or the business we are involved with, and there need to be solutions. The solutions I've heard aren't very clear. What we have is the closure of one site, as has been mentioned by the member from Simcoe North, and that means an opening somewhere else to put that waste.

I'll have more to say on this in a very few minutes, Speaker. With your indulgence, at this time I've used up pretty well all my time.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I want to say for the second time since I've been here in the Legislature, since 1990, that I will be voting in favour of

banning the Adams mine as a site for the disposal of Toronto's waste. I thought in 1991-92, when we brought in legislation that banned the use of the Adams mine, that it was the right thing to do, and I will now in the year 2004 do the same.

I'm glad to have the opportunity to do it twice, in the sense that I've been re-elected, but in the other sense I'm a little bit disappointed at how long this thing has gone on because it's been quite a toll on the community. I think most members will recognize that it is the communities of Earlton, New Liskeard, Kirkland Lake, Timmins and others that have had to deal with the effects of what this project is all about. It's been a huge amount of mobilizing on the part of many volunteers in the communities of Timiskaming.

I think of all the people. I don't want to use one name because it would be really unfair to even name one. Really, it was a community effort of literally thousands of people, who when the previous Conservative government scrapped the NDP legislation that banned the use of the Adams mine site—once the Conservatives banned the NDP legislation, revoked the NDP legislation, it allowed this project to come ahead yet one more time.

Thousands of people in northern Ontario in and around Kirkland Lake, as well as thousands of people here in Toronto, protested, went to city hall. At one point we held up the ONR train by camping on the tracks, if I remember correctly, for almost a week. There was just a humongous amount of community effort at the grassroots to stop this.

I want to say to the government that I could take a shot and say this is the third position you've had on the Adams mine, but I won't do that. I won't talk about how David Peterson was for, then McLeod was against, and then you were for and against again, but I'm not going to do that in this speech. I'm just going to say hooray. It's the right thing to do and we'll support it as quickly as we can get this thing through the House.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I'm pleased to enter into the debate. There is a saying the Lakota people, the First Nations people have, and I think it really infuses what we're going to talk about, which is that we do not inherit this planet from our ancestors, but rather we borrow it from our children. I think if we're thinking about our children, about the future, about what we're leaving to them, that is what inspires this bill.

We're looking at a site that's been proposed for years and years by private interests as a way of making money on the fact that we have communities that decide not to deal responsibly with their own waste because it's easier to take something you don't like and move it someplace else, put it some other place in the province or even send it down to the state of Michigan, rather than deal with it.

I want to give the example of my community of Stratford. Our landfill site has, like every landfill site, a certain amount of time. You can only use it for so long. It fills up. Our community dealt with that issue. It was projected that our landfill site had very few years left. We brought in the blue box program, and that has extended

the life of that landfill for many years into the future to give our community the time to deal with planning ahead, because we don't receive this planet from our ancestors; we're just borrowing it from our children.

I want to commend the Minister of the Environment, because I think that inspiration is what led to this bill, the ability for us to say to people that waste is something we have to deal with in the here and now to protect our children, and that waste, as I've learned, can actually be a resource, particularly in our agricultural communities where they are taking nutrients and turning that into a resource for the generation of energy. So I'll be proud to support the bill.

Mr Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise to make a few comments on this piece of legislation as well, and to the previous speakers. What the member from Perth-Middlesex just said was interesting. He made a statement. I believe it was that we don't inherit this planet from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children. I found that interesting because I think that's a very true statement.

However, I have to look at this piece of legislation, and there are a couple of things on which I hope, when we get to committee, we'll get some strong explanations from the government, from the minister, on what she actually means. I guess I can't understand why she excludes parcels under a hectare in size. You can't put it in the Adams mine. You can't make a landfill out of the Adams mine. You won't put it in the ocean. You wouldn't be able to put it in Lake Ontario or Lake Erie or Lake Couchiching or Lake Simcoe, but if you've got a small, one-hectare property, which is equivalent to roughly two and a half acres and about 100 by 100 feet, why would you be able to create a landfill there? I just can't see why that's in this piece of legislation.

I hope we're going to get that explanation from the staff of the ministry or from the minister herself. But for some reason that's there. Is it to cover up a bunch of little landfills somewhere else in the province that have been approved? We don't know. But certainly it's extremely disappointing when we hear the minister talk about her passion for clean water to allow a parcel, 100 by 100 square feet, that could be considered a small lake, to be used as a landfill in the future. That's what this piece of legislation does. It's very interesting that she hasn't come up with an explanation. In fact, I can't even understand why it's there in the beginning. But I look forward to Mr O'Toole's comments as well.

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The Acting Speaker: The chair recognizes the member for Etobicoke North for a response.

Mr Qaadri: I would like to thank all my honourable colleagues for speaking to this bill, in particular the MPP for Perth-Middlesex, Mr John Wilkinson, for his very well-taken remarks about our safeguarding the sacred trust, the lands and waters of Ontario, for our future generations. I'd also like to thank the MPP for Oakville, Mr Kevin Flynn, for his very eloquent and studied remarks about the various details of Bill 49. As well, I'd like to welcome the support from the MPP for Timmins-

James Bay, Mr Gilles Bisson, and welcome his support from the third party, as yet unrecognized. I would also like to mention that in the spirit of environmental protection and air quality, I would recommend some antibiotics for the extremely nasty cough for the MPP for Timmins-James Bay.

The MPP for Durham, quite rightly, invited members of the viewing audience to tune in by video. I would agree with him. I think the reruns are in fact better than the live action, and perhaps it's also possible to dub over the sound. There's not that much that's value-added for listening to him in person.

I'd like to thank as well the MPP for Simcoe North, Mr Dunlop—

The Acting Speaker: The member for Etobicoke North, will you withdraw that? Where are you going with that comment?

Mr Qaadri: I withdraw.

The MPP for Simcoe North brought forth his concern, quite legitimate, that he can't understand why lakes of particular dimensions are cited in this bill and others are not. I think the long answer will be provided in committee. The short answer is probably "size matters."

Having said all that, I think that this bill amending the Environmental Protection Act and bringing forth an intelligent waste management strategy and saying no to landfill mines, which are lakes in training, as I've stated earlier—these are reasons enough to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Durham.

Mr O'Toole: It's a pleasure, as always, to speak in the House on a government bill which goes a long way to achieving the goals of the minister, as she sees it. I think it's important for the viewers today to realize, I believe, that there needs to be a serious look and examination of how we deal with the waste, not just of Toronto, but that each of us produces in the long run.

It's very appropriate as well to be speaking on one of the few days allocated during the year to Earth Day. In fact, I just want to draw to your attention that in my riding this weekend we will have Earth Day celebrations at Samuel Wilmot Nature Trail. Allan Hewitt is the chair. We'll be unveiling the Lovekin commemorative cairn. It begins at 10 o'clock, and all are welcome. In fact, there's a conflict in my schedule, I notice. I'm not sure which Earth Day event I can attend, but I will be making every effort. It's Earth Day at Hampton's citizens' association. There's a street cleanup, followed by a chili luncheon. It's beginning to sound more attractive. In fact, it's a little closer to where I live.

On a more serious note, it's appropriate in that context, then, to be addressing Bill 49. Bill 49, in my view, has a couple of strong sections. It has a couple of sections I'm quite worried about, and I think it's been brought up by the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. The member has pointed it out, as I will as well.

I think for the viewers it's important to look at the explanatory note in the legislation. It's very specific. The bill was introduced on April 5, 2004, and it says, "The

bill prohibits the disposal of waste at the Adams mine site, an abandoned open pit mine located approximately 10 kilometres southeast of the town of Kirkland Lake." During the last decade, most of lobbying has been done—Joe Mihevc I think was the mayor of the city of Kirkland Lake and was very much an advocate, if I understand it properly. So there was always a willing-host appearance, from what I heard. They felt they could take the waste, sort it, re-divert it, reuse, recycle and in fact enhance the Northland Railway infrastructure, and had other reasons outside of handling waste. I thought they could see it as a growth opportunity.

But here is the important part: "The bill revokes certain environmental approvals that have been issued in connection with the possible disposal of waste at the Adams mine site." So what it does is revoke certain legal procedures that have occurred, and there again we have the shadow of retroactivity, which is troublesome to me in a legal sense.

Also in the explanatory note it says, "It also renders of no force"—that's a legal term—"or effect certain agreements that may have been entered into with the crown"—that is the people of Ontario—"relating to lands described in the bill that are adjacent to the Adams mine site...." That part renders certain agreements of no force. These are agreements made with the crown, with the people of Ontario, in good faith, as most legal agreements are. That's pretty onerous, retroactive, regressive; I'm not sure what the spirit is here. That's not saying I support the outcome. I think due process is important to each and every one of us. It's a matter of our privilege and our right, which are being taken away here.

As a matter of fact it goes on to say, "... that are adjacent to the Adams mine site, as well as any letters patent that may be issued in respect of those lands." There again a legal entitlement is being removed with the stroke of the minister's pen.

It sounds very much like several of the actions taken by the government are rather centralist, bureaucratic and overarching, grasping control of the Ministry of Health, or the Ministry of Education in terms of the announcement today, forcing school boards to have classes of exactly this size, which will mean triple-grading or double-grading of primary grades—probably the most regressive move I've heard in some time—overstepping the directors of education who really, at the end of the day, are there as professional educators, as opposed to Mr Kennedy, who is a professional politician, as we all are here.

There is another section in the preamble that says, "The bill extinguishes certain causes of action"—these are court procedures—"that may exist in respect of the Adams mine site or the adjacent lands." "Extinguishes": The choice of word there is like stomping it out or revengefully taking action. That's the impression I get. The tone here is—I hope it's not been directed by the minister.

I'm just going to take a little bit of time out here for a moment. The Minister of the Environment—I'm aware

of two issues that I've seen in the Gazette. One was the water-taking permit at the Tay River, which was in Mr Sterling's riding. You'd have to look at that as an intervention in a water-taking permit. I'm not sure of the details on this but I thought it was a bit trite, a bit political. I wouldn't like to suggest for a moment there could be political interference. Then today, during question period, there was a response, which is in Hansard today, April 22. People listening or reading Hansard later on should account to the question by the member from Lanark-Carleton to the Minister of the Environment with respect to an environmental assessment process on a road widening which would prevent accidents. If she had stuck to the script in her response, she would have been fine, but she went to add the little stick, the little barb, the little expunge, the little extinguish, the little, I say, arrogant term—maybe it's not more than that, but the arrogant term—back to the Minister of the Environment. Mr Sterling—been here for 25 years; a former Minister of the Environment, a lawyer, an engineer and a hard-working member for his constituents—was snubbed, was put down. The constituents, in my view, will be treated as second class. I think more will be said on this in the very near future, because the prior minister is very strongly informed.

1700

But I'm going to go back to Bill 49, on which I think there's so much to say that I shouldn't be wasting the time on these personal events of the day that have shaken me, shaken my confidence in a minister's ability to lead objectively a minister's action. It has shaken my confidence.

The bill extinguishes certain causes of action—very surprising. Also, the bill entitles a numbered company, 1532382 Ontario Inc, to compensation from the crown in respect to certain expenses. Well, as has been said earlier—I think it was by the member from Simcoe North, or it may have been the member beside me from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, a practising lawyer of some note, I might say, in labour law primarily. But Mr Tascona did say to me that these people will be in court and there will be big money, and people should know it's taxpayers' money that will be at stake.

I believe the issue here is the closing of the Adams mine site once and for all. It's clear to me that this is going into the courts now. The garbage, the boxes and boxes of waste, or paper, will be created by the lawyers, for the lawyers, and they'll have to create another dump site to actually deal with all the waste.

"The bill amends the Environmental Protection Act to prohibit a person from operating a waste disposal site" in any part of the site.

Here's the whole point. This thing here, Bill 49, doesn't go very far. It deals with the Adams mine site, but everyone knows we have a garbage crisis. It's not just Toronto. I think earlier actions by the ministry and Waste Diversion Ontario were to encourage, incent and motivate, encouraging communities and families to reduce, reuse and recycle.

I'd have to compliment Durham region. They've gone a long way in setting very high-level targets on wet waste. I know that in our household we do participate in the green pail, wet-waste program, composting. I think that's extremely important, as is glass and paper, which has been done for some time. I know we can each reduce. We have to look at source reduction. There's no question of that. I won't disagree with that at all.

In fact, I drive home pretty well every night. Sometimes I take the GO train, when time permits. I drive up some of the main streets and there's paper blowing all over the place in the city here, in Toronto. Then I think of the numbers in Toronto. Where are they going to put it? Keele Valley? Are they going to reopen that? Are they going to put it out at the old Brock West landfill site that the member from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge—that's just not acceptable.

That leads me to the whole point. You've closed off the rail north option. That debate's been had for quite a few years. I am not in a position to say whether it was good, bad or indifferent. We had the mayor from Kirkland Lake and other community leaders who were for it, and we had those who were against it. We saw that all play out in Toronto council, when there was the great hoopla where they finally signed the contract with Michigan to truck our waste to Michigan.

How incomplete is that responsibility? I think it completely avoids making the difficult decisions to manage the waste. It also leads me to think of the history of the waste debate. In the very limited time—I only have about eight minutes left—I want to go through a bit of the history, however incomplete it might be.

If I go back to when Mr Bradley was the Minister of the Environment, I was a councillor at that time in what was then the town of Newcastle, now the municipality of Clarington. The Liberals had a plan, which was looking at trying to identify appropriate sites, encouraging municipalities and planning staff to work to try to manage their own waste. In fact, it was a long way along until the NDP came in under Ruth Grier. Some would say it was their undoing.

I'm reading an article here in the Environmental Science and Engineering magazine, November 2003, and it is available at www.esemag.com. The heading is "Could Even Dr Johnson's Wit Cope With Toronto's Ongoing Garbage Crises?" It says: "Currently, Toronto faces its most serious garbage crisis. If it were made into a film it could be an environmental remake of From Here to Eternity, a veritable triumph of ecological evangelists over professional engineers and chemists. In the 1990s, the Ontario NDP, under the then Environment Minister Ruth Grier, created the Interim Waste Authority—the infamous IWA—"which spent some \$80 million seeking a waste disposal solution without a single bag of garbage ever being interred."

There you are. In all honesty, I think the final expenditure—Walter Pitman was the head of that and I participated as an elected councillor at the time—was over \$100 million and they never sited one bag of garbage. The

purpose of the Interim Waste Authority was that each region—York, Peel, Durham and the city of Toronto—all had to find their own host, go through a whole environmental assessment led by Walter Pitman, a remarkable former NDP member, giving the dog-and-pony show, getting the little bit of money to run the IWA—blah, blah, blah—a political appointment, a remarkable man, former president of Ryerson, I think, but nonetheless he didn't site one bag of garbage with all the money.

It's a tragic waste. I look at the Ottawa siting task force on radioactive waste at Wesleyville and the town of Port Hope. They have been trying to relocate that for about the last 20-plus years. They have spent probably into the hundreds of millions of dollars, certainly \$100-million-plus, and they haven't relocated one teaspoon of waste, not a thimbleful.

I've just responded to the crisis facing Toronto, not by my words; these are the words of an article here. I've got another article here. This is by another person, an environmental reporter on CityTV—in fact, he ran for the Liberals—Bob Hunter. This article is June 8, 1995. He says, "After all, Bob Rae had published a position paper called Greening the Party, Greening the Province, which called for rather radical action, all things considered, on the eco-front."

This article is worth referring to because it's a rather castigating article, a very critical article. It goes on to talk about the Interim Waste Authority. But the other causes of those kinds of regressive steps in managing waste—I'm going to cite a couple of them. I'm reading on the second page of this article:

"Yet as we come down to the wire in this election, most environmentalists are wondering what the hell happened"—pardon my language, I'm quoting—"to the NDP on the way to green Jerusalem.

"I think the whole dilemma was summed up, probably inadvertently, by Bob Rae when he commented that if either the Tories or Liberals get in, environment will be 'even less of a priority' [than] it was under the NDP."

Imagine that. He's saying that under the NDP it was a low priority. I don't think they ever wanted to find a solution in the Interim Waste Authority, or any other solutions.

In the current discussion in the very few minutes I have left, this article is from the Toronto Star, the Liberals' briefing notes as far as I'm concerned, on April 20. Its title is "Don't Dump on Us, Halton Pleads." There's Halton region, very much a mirror image in many cases looking a lot like Durham, saying that they don't want Toronto's garbage. In fact, "The minister has the power in an emergency to direct that Toronto's garbage go to a municipal landfill site such as Halton's." The minister is quoted here, "But 'it's not something she expects to be using.'" It's not very reassuring that the minister is not expecting to. What if Michigan actually shuts down the border? What if there's a certain incident out of order that cuts that down? Where are they going to put the garbage? It's going to be, as Mr Barrett, the member for

Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, said earlier, NIMBY, not in my backyard.

1710

The Interim Waste Authority found, I think, five sites in Durham region. It was a very difficult, upsetting process for the residents of those communities. In Newtonville I can recall one site specifically—a great deal of unrest near Graham Creek, actually, where people were outraged that this could possibly end up in their backyard. In almost any location the neighbours, people who live nearby—the environment, the whole thing is a tough decision. I put to the government in my closing remarks, what is the plan? It's fine, the rail north option?

I'm going to put something on the table that might be quite new. As we might recall, the NDP put a moratorium on incineration. I'm not saying that incineration or gasification or energy from waste shouldn't be one of the considerations—or should; that's up to them. Being government is more difficult than being opposition. But it's my understanding, and I've seen reports from Holland, that they have a program which is called EFI, energy from waste. They direct certain waste streams, wet and otherwise, and use biomass, gasification and very high temperatures that actually molecularly change the components of garbage. At the end of it there is still a certain amount of ash, fly ash or leachate left, as there is in a regular, normally engineered dump site. There's going to be decomposition and leachate that accumulates and must be managed wherever it is. It wouldn't matter whether it was in Kirkland Lake, Halton, Peel or York region. York perhaps will be host to its own site. Who knows what the Liberals will do?

I put to you that they have no plan. They really don't have a plan other than taking action against the rail north option. One option that I think could be discussed in an all-party setting is the role of incineration—appropriate, environmentally accountable and meeting all the thresholds for clean air. Otherwise it's going into dump sites, into the ground, it's decaying and creating leachate, leachate is going into groundwater and eventually everything that's on the surface of the earth goes into the water. This is a tough issue. I don't think this bill has any substance other than that it's punitive to the city of Kirkland Lake.

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I'm happy to speak to this bill on the protection of the Adams mine site. I want to pick up on a couple of things that the member for Durham said. The first one is, "What is the plan?" I think it's quite clear from everything that we're doing in this House that our plan is to protect the natural resources of this province. That is our plan. We are going to protect the water and the green space and we are going to conserve energy. This bill is part of that plan. I think the reason there isn't substantive argument in the House today is that you really can't argue against protecting water. You can't argue against not taking a risk of tainting water. That's what this bill is about. We're not going to take that risk; we're going to protect this site.

I have a daughter who's just about to graduate from the University of Victoria with an environmental studies degree. I think what we have to do is use our children as touchstones on these issues. Can we justify the legislation that's going through this House to our children? If we cannot, and I don't think we could justify legislation that wouldn't protect the Adams mine, then we should not be enacting that legislation.

I'm proud to support this legislation. I'm proud to be able to justify it to my children and your children and to preserve this site.

Mr Bisson: Hence the reason why you should never have the rump sitting between two opposition parties. You get the point.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: That's why we should bifurcate you guys. Anyways, that's another story. We'll deal with that later.

It's interesting, because when it comes to the debate around garbage, there's a certain amount of politics that's played around this whole issue, and unfortunately who gets caught up in the crossfire is the public.

That's not to say that this legislation is political in the sense that the government is trying to play politics. That's not the point I make. But if you look at the entire issue of garbage, we have been dealing with this now for the better part of 15 years. We're no closer today than we were 15 years ago to finding a way to deal with waste in the GTA. If we had continued the process we started some 15 years ago, we'd at least be in a position today of having made the decision of where those sites would be. At the end of the day some people would be unhappy, there's no question. As the people in Kirkland Lake were unhappy to have a garbage dump created in an aquifer in a mine, so would people be in other areas that would have a garbage dump created in their backyard. Nonetheless, we need to find a way to deal with this.

My only point is that it's unfortunate that the politics around the Adams mine has really turned back the clock about 15 years when it comes to the possibility of finding a solution. What are the solutions? I think members here have talked about them to a certain extent. It's all about reduction, about how we try to lessen the need to put things into a dump. Trying to develop new technologies is a whole other issue. Do we need to revisit policies that were made in Ontario over the last 20 to 25 years that may or may not be a solution to the garbage issue in the GTA?

I want to say, in the last couple of seconds I've got, that sometimes we get caught up in the politics of an issue so badly that we're probably doing a bit of a disservice to the general population, and I think that's what happened with this one. The Adams mine is dead. Let's move on. Let's not go back and try to redo 15 years—

Mr Colle: You think it's dead?

Mr Bisson: It had better be dead.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Oshawa.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I look forward to commenting on the member from Durham's comments.

It's a matter of the new government being in power and they've made a decision on what to move forward with. But as mentioned by the member for Timmins-James Bay, what's going to take place with the garbage? How is it going to be dealt with?

Our local mayor and the council at that time: Those individuals who were opposed to the site were defeated at the last municipal election and those who supported the site were elected back into office. I don't know what the polling was for the member from that area and how they did in that area, but that may say something about the immediate area. They saw jobs in there.

My own personal belief on that would have been that a processing plant to process anything before it goes in to ensure there wouldn't be any environmental impacts would have saved a substantial number of problems in that area. But as the member for Durham stated, what are you going to do with the garbage, and how is it going to come forward?

The other thing is, I would have hoped the member from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge had had input on this bill when it came forward. It specifically states in Bill 49 that waste could not be put in there. So what takes place in other groups—I'm sure the member from Durham knows very well—they do a process and they convert waste material to processed material. So is there an opportunity for processed material, as is currently being used—oh, I don't know—for SoundSorb or some of the other commodities out there, possibly going to be allowed, through this legislation, to be put in that site? That is something you should be very cognizant of. If you don't realize it, a processed material may be allowed to be put in as it is no longer waste as has been used in other ones.

I look forward to Mr O'Toole's comments in wrapping up.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Kathleen O. Wynne): The Chair recognizes the member from Nipissing.

1720

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 49, An Act to prevent the disposal of waste at the Adams mine site. As you know, the Adams mine site is relatively close to my riding. Certainly, it was a topic of much debate in my riding during the election, with many of my constituents raising concerns with respect to whether or not the mine shaft was containable, and whether or not there would be leakage from the mine. I met with a former miner, who now resides in Astorville, who raised his concerns with me in a very passionate way, and was very concerned about the development of this mine as a waste site. Many of my constituents were very concerned about bringing Toronto's waste north.

We are very proud to live in the north. We are proud of our natural resources, we are proud of our heritage in the north, and we were very concerned that bringing the garbage of the south to the north would just decimate our beautiful landscape and what we have grown to enjoy and what many in the south come to enjoy in the summer as part of our tourism industry in the north.

The member for Durham made a number of interesting comments, as he usually does, using terms to define our government as regressive and retroactive, which are really terms that I've only ever used in reference to his previous government. He was also very concerned with respect to legal entitlements that are being removed. I would just remind the honourable member for Durham that section 6 of the act clearly outlines that the crown, in right of Ontario, shall pay compensation for various expenses incurred by the developer of the Adams mine.

I agree with member for Don Valley East, who spoke of the need to reduce our waste. I think we need to start with our young people and our education on reduction of waste, and start talking to our manufacturers about the extent of the packaging that we use in today's society and how we could reduce that in order to reduce the waste that we are developing in all of our communities. So I am pleased to speak in favour of this bill and very proud to be from northern Ontario.

Mr O'Toole: I want to thank the members for Don Valley West, Timmins-James Bay, Oshawa, and Nipissing for their comments, because it is exactly what we're here for, which is to bring different points of view. I think the member for Oshawa has a much deeper insight than the other comments that were made, and I compliment the fact that he brought to the attention of the viewers that there was a lot of work done by the Protect the Ridges organization dealing with the spreading of biosolids on to land. I would hope that the minister would work on that, because there are other options that have been brought to my attention from Durham; that is, the use of the Wesleyville site, that current site owned by OPG near Wesleyville. Most people would know that as a future use for some—but I want to comment as well on the work done by the member for Oshawa and myself and others in the all-party committee, the select committee on alternative fuels.

Just a couple of the recommendations here are worth putting on the record. It does talk about the use of all sources of power or fuel. One of them is that the Ontario government, in association with the agricultural industry and livestock producers, shall commit to demonstrate a program for the collection and use of livestock-derived biogas as power in the province of Ontario, as well as switchgrass and other products. It also talks about waste, wood chips from forestry and other forms of waste being utilized in the production of energy.

As the member for Timmins-James Bay said, new technologies—and I'd encourage members to be patient. The whole idea of plasma burn, gasification and intense heats in the use and destruction of materials—ultimately all waste decomposes, either faster by using heat or some other chemical means, or slower by putting it in a dump. It all has residual waste that could be potentially hazardous to people, but it must be managed. I think looking at the past, you've got to look to the future and come up with new solutions.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I am very pleased to have an opportunity to speak in support of the Adams Mine Lake Act, 2004, which, if passed, would ensure that the Adams mine lake would never be used as a landfill site. I'm pleased today to share my time with the member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

My grandmother taught me a long time ago that you should take good care of what you've been blessed with and leave this world a little better place than you found it. So on Earth Day, I'm very pleased to have a chance to talk about a piece of legislation which I think will make the world a little better place than we found it, and it will be taking good care of our environment.

Bill 49 is also part of our government's plan to create clean, liveable communities across Ontario by starting to deal head-on and in a responsible and innovative way with waste diversion. Our goal in this endeavour is to divert 60% of Ontario's waste from disposal by 2008.

Our government is developing a comprehensive waste strategy to deal with the mess that has been left by our predecessors. It's clear, as a member from the greater Toronto area, that no one is happy with the fact that our garbage is going to Michigan. As a province we want to show leadership and work with municipalities to help them find long-term solutions to this problem. In early May the minister will release a discussion paper seeking public input on ways to increase waste diversion from disposal to 60%. The current rate is about 30%. So that will provide each of us in our own community an opportunity to go and talk about the issue of waste diversion.

In my own community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, the issue of taking care of our environment is an important one. Last evening, I had an opportunity to participate with my whole community in an event that brought forward all the volunteer groups to talk about what they did. There was a number of volunteer groups that participated that look after our environment, look after the lakeshore, make sure our waterfront is clean, and volunteer their time to participate and clean up our parkland. I think I mentioned earlier that this weekend my colleague from Etobicoke Centre, Donna Cansfield, and I will be participating in a friendly competition of cleaning up a lot of the garbage that exists in our community, to celebrate Earth Day along with the many volunteers I know will come out.

One of the other components we will be bringing forward as part of this comprehensive waste diversion strategy is appointing an expert panel to review the environmental assessment process that's been left in limbo by a court decision that ruled the old approach was wrong and has left several landfill sites unable to expand. We're going to take advantage of the great deal of expertise that exists across the province, bring those people together and talk about how we can better the environmental assessment process to make sure it works for all of us and that we're all working in the same direction to ensure, once again, that our waste is better managed, in a more responsible and innovative way, and that we deal with environmental assessments across the province.

We're going to be asking that panel to recommend changes to the Assessment Act that will provide municipalities and industry with certainty, which is an important factor as we move forward and hope to have increased initiatives across the province. That will also shorten the process for them—again, they'll get that certainty in a quicker period of time—and at the same time will continue to protect our environment.

We also view as important and will be working in co-operation with our federal partners in Ottawa to streamline the process so projects that require environmental assessment under both provincial and federal laws are not tied up in lengthy hearings and that we co-operate. If there was one message that resonated as I had an opportunity over the last number of months and before that to talk to people in the community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, it was that all levels of government should work together when they're working on the same initiatives: "Don't make business jump through hoops with the province and jump through hoops with the federal government. Don't make us, as community activists and folks who want to do good things in our community, fight on all fronts."

Under our proposal, we would propose that hearings with both the federal and provincial governments be held at the same time. Those are some of the important strategies that we are bringing forward as part of this comprehensive waste diversion plan.

Improving the management of solid waste and aggressively exploring waste diversion is an important topic currently throughout North America and around the world. In the city of Toronto, waste management has been a much-discussed topic for several years, much of it by necessity, perhaps. Innovation is sometimes motivated by the necessity to deal with a situation. But we've had rising disposal costs and increased recognition that we need to protect our environment. We need to start developing an integrated solid waste management plan that examines all the aspects of air and water pollution and energy consumption, which may be either enhanced or negatively affected by waste management.

Some colleagues today have talked about issues of waste diversion. We also need to seriously examine the issue of waste minimization or waste reduction. Some of the current diversion programs that exist in the city of Toronto include the green bin program that diverts organic materials from landfill and turns them into compost. Phase one began in Etobicoke in September 2002. By the time the city fully rolls out that program by end of 2005 the green bin program is expected to drive diversion rates up to 42%, because organics make up more than 30% of household garbage. Rather than putting that in a landfill we can collectively compost that together.

1730

New waste diversion collection programs for government agencies and small business include the yellow bag program, familiar to many of you who have businesses in the city of Toronto, which has been diverting approximately 200 tonnes of organic material each week.

Implementation of continued recycling programs to 100% of multi-family buildings: There have been many years when it has only been single homes that have instituted recycling programs.

Something else we recently saw in Etobicoke-Lakeshore in the city of Toronto was the ban on grass clipping collection. Although many of my neighbours in the community at first were startled by the fact that we could no longer put our grass clippings out on the curb, it forced each one of us to deal with our own waste, to find a way to use that in our own gardens and compost and recycle those grass clippings ourselves, rather than simply dump a bag at the curb and expect that someone else will deal with the waste you've collected.

Another changeover that happened was changing from clear plastic waste bags for compostable materials to the compostable kraft paper bags, or using rigid containers. It kept the compost cleaner and didn't contaminate it with plastic product.

Lastly, the city of Toronto has also established a mandatory recycling bylaw.

All those things have been moving us toward an increase in waste diversion and recycling that material. I know the city is looking at additional plans that might include testing systems to be able to collect organics from apartment buildings and condos. Currently, it is only city homes that do that work. Also, expanding the scrap metal collection is underway.

As a province, this legislation that I'm proud to support is demonstrating leadership. We know that most of the waste going to Michigan from Toronto is from Toronto and other parts of the GTA. We're confident that our government working together with the city of Toronto will do everything it can to encourage the city's commitment to waste diversion. That commitment and the city's is consistent with our own commitment to better manage our waste and find solutions and work with municipalities to move forward.

Ontarians desire cleaner communities that will improve the quality of life, and I am confident our waste diversion plan will deliver that. We're going to work with communities to further educate them with respect to recycling, to considering issues of mandatory diversion, to looking at banning recyclables and organics from landfills.

All of those options will be considered in the full context of really wanting to live by the principles I started with today. My grandmother taught me, "Take good care of what you have been blessed with; leave the world a better place." On Earth Day, I'm proud to support a piece of legislation that is the start of a government that is going to take a real effort and a real direction with respect to waste management and diversion.

Mr Colle: It's an honour to follow my colleague from Mimico, New Toronto, Etobicoke-Lakeshore, and her very compelling comments about her grandmother. I think that in many ways, as much as we sometimes hear it is important to look to children to lead the way in terms of finding some interest and involvement in environ-

mental issues, we should also look to our seniors. I know that in the riding of Eglinton-Lawrence—I know the pages here probably don't know where the riding of Eglinton-Lawrence is, because some of the pages are here from James Bay, Stratford, all over the province. The road called Eglinton is quite a rare main street. It goes through most of the former municipalities of the once-called Metro Toronto. It goes through Etobicoke, York, a little bit of North York, East York, Toronto and Scarborough. It's one of the only streets in Toronto to go through all of the former municipalities, so you get a pretty good idea of what ordinary people are doing. That's about 2.3 million people. If you go to a main street like Eglinton and you see how they react to what government is doing, you understand that sometimes governments should look to ordinary people to find solutions.

If you look at the seniors who live at Eglinton and Lawrence, along Eglinton Avenue—I'm sure it's the same thing if you look at the seniors down in Mimico—there's hardly anything in their blue box. The blue boxes are sometimes completely empty. It's not like some people in other parts of Toronto, where all you see in the blue box is LCBO bottles—which, by the way, should not even be there in the first place. But if you watch seniors' garbage, they're lucky if they put one little Honest Ed's plastic bag out. They actually don't buy packaged food products. They buy, believe it or not—my colleague from Chatham-Kent will understand this, being a farmer, the only farmer, I think, in the Legislature. He will tell you that they actually might be advised to buy fresh. You actually go to the vegetable market and buy real spinach, not in a package. You buy carrots that aren't in a can. These are amazing things that seniors do. I think seniors understand that you should not waste things and that packaging is waste.

Packaging costs us a fortune. Packaging literally is costing the city of Toronto—and you know, the pages here from all over Ontario should understand. The city of Toronto pays \$50 million a year to truck its garbage—it's called garbage; it's not really garbage—and to my colleague from Thornhill, I think they're part of it too. They give us some garbage too, to go along to Michigan. It costs \$50-million-plus a year in trucks to put our waste into some hole in a farm in Michigan. You know, that's about a five- or six-hour drive down the 401 and QEW. If you live up in James Bay, can you imagine spending \$50 million a year trucking garbage? That's what we're doing right now. We really have not found a solution to how we reduce, how we divert, how we don't essentially create waste.

Talking about creating waste, as the member from James Bay, who's been here forever, it seems, will tell you, this is not the first attempt by a government to put this Adams mine scheme to bed. I remember, going back to the Metropolitan Toronto council, back to 1988, when I first saw this scheme come before us to use trains and rail lines to take our waste and truck it up to Kirkland Lake. Pages: 600 kilometres. We were going to put gar-

bage on trains that would run all day and night with our waste up to a mine in Kirkland Lake. Can you imagine doing that? How much would that cost? I'm sure it would cost about the same, \$50 million, \$60 million, \$100 million a year to do this. This is what we were going to do with Toronto's waste: put it on trains.

We are begging to find public transit or train travel to put people on, yet we can afford, or the Adams mine scheme was going to find, millions of dollars to put garbage on trains. We should be putting people on trains, not our waste. This was the Adams mine scheme that kept on reappearing. Local councils in Toronto kept reappearing in this Legislature for the last 15 years. Do you know why this keeps reappearing? Because this scheme was going to make a small group of people very wealthy. There was more money spent lobbying governments, especially the previous government, who were supporters of the Adams mine scheme—they spent literally millions wining and dining people for the last 15 years, because this Adams mine scheme was going to make some people very rich. That's why it's like Dracula that keeps coming back out of its coffin.

I hope to God this is the last time that this ludicrous so-called plan or scheme ever comes before any kind of elected body. It's got to be over with. I know members of the former Conservative government across the way know it's a foolhardy scheme that had so many proponents—shipping our waste up to Kirkland Lake by rail haul. A total waste of, you might say, of money.

1740

Finally, I think the Minister of the Environment has put together an end to this scheme once and for all. It's done, it's over with. All the concoctions, the buying of crown land by mysterious numbered companies, that's finally over with. I hope that we, as citizens of Toronto, as citizens of this province, understand that we now face the tough work ahead in terms of dealing with our waste, the diversion and reduction of our waste. Up until now, we have not really had a good record in reducing our waste, whether it be the city of Toronto or Ontario as a whole. One reason the previous government walked away from any waste diversion funding for municipalities was because the former Premier had one idea: he wanted the waste to go up to the Adams mine. That's why everything else was off the table, so we had no waste diversion strategy in Ontario for the last eight years because everything was supposed to go to the Adams mine.

Now, the work at hand is most challenging because it's not going to be easy to stop trucking the garbage to Michigan, which we shouldn't do. But that's going to take a completely different mindset for ordinary Ontarians. That's why, at the beginning, I mentioned that we have to start to look at our seniors in small communities like Mimico and the city of York, or big communities like Woodbridge, where the seniors can actually eat, breathe and have a very good life and they don't produce this waste. How can they do it? Why is it that everyone else is so in love with packaging that we have to spend

all this time and money packaging, which then has to be trucked to Michigan? Why do we have to have this Ontario entity called the LCBO, which cannot do what The Beer Stores do and recycle bottles? We have to truck LCBO bottles to Michigan too. That's ludicrous. It's about time that we started to come to grips with this.

This bill is the first step where the McGuinty government is saying, "We are now going to invest in waste reduction and diversion strategies which are meaningful, and we're not looking for these magic, foolhardy schemes like the Adams mine. That's done with." But it's not going to be done easily. We've tried this before in the past. It has not been successful. It's going to take dedication and a lot of commitment by this Legislature and by citizens of Ontario to reduce waste, to reduce packaging, to make an incredible commitment to saving our environment, saving our resources, saving our money, getting rid of all of this duplication of packaging, and remembering that this is something that has to be done because there aren't going to be any more silver bullets like the Adams mine. Michigan is eventually going to have to come to a stop. We're going to have to deal with it in a comprehensive way. This is the beginning of this comprehensive approach to reducing our waste in Ontario. That's why we should support this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I'm pleased to add some comments about the discussion of Bill 49 today, this being Earth Day, and to the members for Etobicoke-Lakeshore and Eglinton-Lawrence, who were making some remarks.

The government has set a target of 60% diversion of waste from landfills for a few years from now. Today on Earth Day, I introduced a bill that I'm sure the member for Eglinton-Lawrence supports, and that's the LCBO Deposit and Return Act, 2004. The idea of that bill is to provide a deposit-return system on wine and liquor bottles and basically keep them out of our landfill sites. I say this is a first step, and this will help the government meet its target of 60% diversion, but it's a first step.

We need to look at British Columbia, where they have a deposit-return system on virtually all beverage containers and all packaging, and they just have great success. First of all, the system makes money. I think the gross revenue on the non-alcoholic containers is \$76 million, roughly. The costs are about \$71 million, so they make \$5 million on it. But then there are other great benefits: space saved in landfill sites; a huge difference in the litter in the province of British Columbia, something like a 50% reduction in the amount of litter; reduced consumption of barrels of oil—178,284; reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

So I really think the province of Ontario needs to look at the other eight provinces in Canada that already have a deposit-return system and move toward that type of system, because I believe it can make a huge difference for this province in terms of meeting some of its waste diversion targets and dealing with the waste of this province and of this country more effectively.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Bisson: Madam Chair, welcome to the Chair.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, sir.

Mr Bisson: It's pleasant to see.

Applause.

Mr Bisson: It doesn't take much to get people going here on a Friday afternoon, or a Thursday afternoon, I should say. It's like our weekend, Thursday. We go back to the constituencies on Thursday, so our Thursday is like Friday for everybody else.

I actually want to commend the comments by Mr Colle, the member for—

Mr Colle: Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr Bisson: Eglinton-Lawrence. Thank you. I didn't want to look down, because by the time I found it on the sheet, it would be the end of my time.

I actually wanted to commend some of the comments he made, because I think they're in keeping with some of the problems we have had around the whole issue of the debate on garbage. I know the member was on Toronto city council prior to coming here. It was Toronto city council? Yes. So he understands well what the issues are from both a municipal and provincial perspective. It's not an easy issue to deal with. It takes some political will and a bit of courage on the part of politicians to deal with it, because it's the type of issue that flares people up pretty darn quickly.

I understand how difficult it is for a government, because I was there. I remember sitting in the Bob Rae government when we went through the cancellation of the Adams mine. At the time, if you remember, Metro Toronto wanted to do it. We passed legislation similar to this to cancel it. There was a huge organization against our cancellation of that because of what it meant to Toronto and in Kirkland Lake—those who wanted it. I also remember the Interim Waste Authority and the difficulty around that.

I'm just saying that I don't envy the job the government has got to do now. You should have let us do the Interim Waste Authority; at least we would have worn it. But now you're going to have to wear it, is all I'm saying, because the reality is that we're going to have to deal with this, and you're not going to call it an Interim Waste Authority. Basically you're going to do the same thing that the Rae government was faced with early on in the 1990s. I just say good luck, because it's a difficult one. We'll support you as best we can because we understand this is a tough issue to deal with.

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I'm pleased to rise. I want to commend the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, who took a very complicated subject and in a short time encapsulated very pertinent opinions, and the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, who can, as always in this House, bring something to the debate on all occasions.

I want to comment on the fact that he thought that the street that runs through his riding is very long. I'm told that Yonge Street actually begins in northwestern Ontario in a small town called Emo. I've been to Emo, and the

people there told me that Yonge Street begins there and travels down here to Toronto.

Both members talked about packaging and diverting our waste. Packaging is an interesting conversation in itself. I know that when you go to the meat counter on many occasions, when you go to buy your meats for your barbecue this season, perhaps, you'll find that it's on a Styrofoam tray wrapped in plastic. I've watched most customers do this, and I admit that we do it as well. We then grab a plastic bag and put the plastic-covered meat on a Styrofoam tray in a plastic bag. Then we go to pay for these food items that we bought, and the cashier takes the meat that's on a Styrofoam tray wrapped in plastic that's been put in a plastic bag, and puts it into another plastic bag. So here we have this item wrapped three times. We have to give some thought to this, I think, on how to control the proliferation of what then becomes a waste product. We diversify in much of our municipality. We separate glass, plastic, tin; we even, therefore, separate clear glass from coloured glass. We even separate some plastics from other plastics.

1750

Mr Dunlop: I'd like to make a few comments on the comments of the members from Eglinton-Lawrence and Etobicoke-Lakeshore today, and I hope you do well in your cleanup day tomorrow with Mrs Cansfield. I can't remember her riding.

I think there's no question that people here in this room are all very concerned about the environment. It is kind of appropriate that we're talking about the Adams Mine Lake Act on Earth Day. I know in my interest in the environment—I could throw this at the people here in this room. I don't know how many people actually belong or have your constituency staff do it or you do it yourselves—I wonder how many people actually look after a section of road and clean up the garbage. That's fairly important in our part of the province, and a lot of community organizations and individuals will actually pick up the garbage along a section of the highway. My wife and I look after about five kilometres in an area. We've already got our section cleaned up for the year and it's nice, but it's discouraging when you see the kind of stuff that's thrown out into the ditches: pop cans and liquor bottles and things that should not be going on the side of the road, because who wants it to be sloppy?

I do want to compliment both Mr Colle and Mr Miller for their commitment. I'm a supporter of that potential legislation in the future. I know there are some obstructions at the LCBO—I've been told that has been going on for a number of decades—but I would really like, in this

Parliament, to get that bill passed one way or the other, whether it's a government bill or whether it's Mr Miller's bill, and actually see a recycling program and a reuse program put in place by the Liquor Control Board of Ontario. I know it's going to be difficult, but I think here on Earth Day it's worth commenting on that.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore has two minutes to respond.

Ms Broten: I think our government acknowledges that a 60% waste diversion plan is an ambitious target, but we need to take an ambitious step forward. I'm proud to be talking about the fact that we are going to take an ambitious step forward.

If we look at other jurisdictions, we can compare ourselves in Ontario to other jurisdictions that have been much more successful with respect to waste diversion than we. Ontario currently diverts only 25% of waste despite guarantees in the past that we would be moving to a 50% diversion rate. Communities like Edmonton and Halifax both divert 65% of their waste. So it is possible, it is plausible and it can be achieved if you show the leadership.

My friends opposite were paying quite a bit of attention as I spoke about my grandmother. I want to talk about the fact that not only did she teach us these lessons, but she led by example. My colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence was talking about looking at seniors in our community. I can look to my own grandmother, who led by example. She was a leader in reducing, reusing and recycling. My grandmother is 99 years old right now and lives in the community of Edmonton, which is currently diverting 65% of their waste. She lived through the drought, she lived through difficult times, and she was someone who recycled all those plastic bags, recycled that newspaper, reused those containers, whether in her garden or elsewhere.

If you go back to a time when we really did consider what we were throwing out—and it was much more difficult to throw garbage out because you had to take it yourself. We've perhaps become complacent over the last number of years; it's easy to put that garbage on the curb and have someone else pick it up. But this government is going to take ambitious steps. I'm proud to be part of that, and I look forward to seeing us successful and completing a 60% waste diversion strategy in the near future.

The Acting Speaker: It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30.

The House adjourned at 1755.

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